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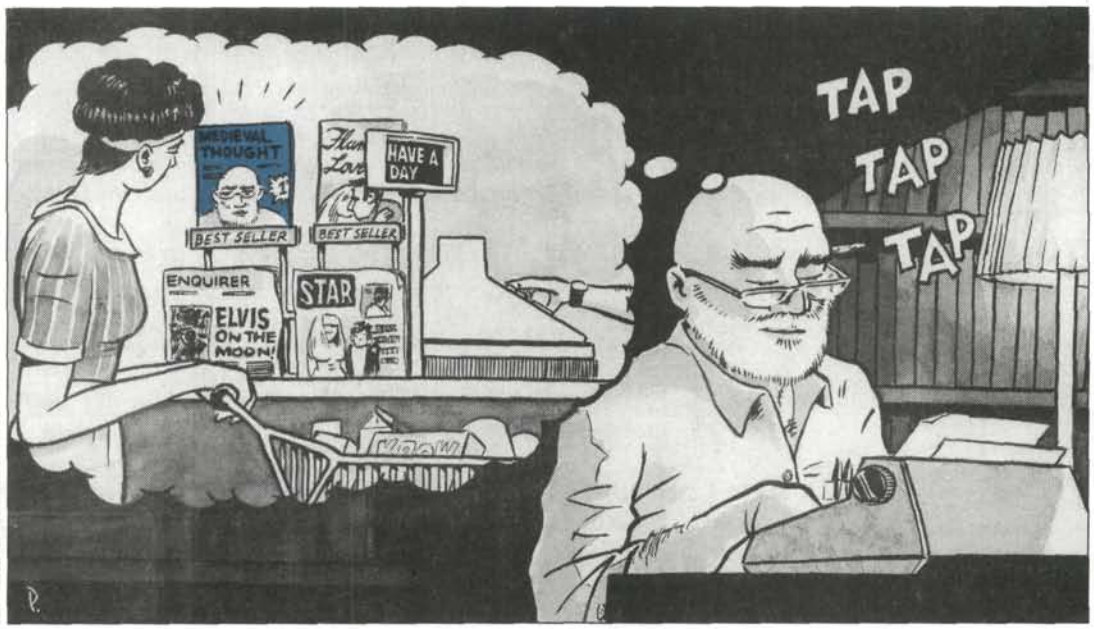

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CROSSOVER DREAMS

CAN A LITERARY AGENT MAKE YOURS COME TRUE?

Norman Cantor, New York University history professor and author, most recently of *Inventing the Middle Ages*, created a stir this spring when he wrote a letter to the newsletter of the American Historical Association declaring that "no historian who can write English prose should publish more than two books with a university press—one book for tenure, and one for full professor. After that (or preferably long before) work only in the trade market." Cantor urged his fellow scholars to secure literary agents to represent any work with crossover potential. And he didn't stop there: As if to be sure of offending the entire academic community, Cantor added, "If you are already a full professor, your agent should be much more important to you than the department chair or the dean." *Continued on page 16*

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Letters to the *Editor*

MORE TRIBALISM?

Thanks so much for the charming juxtaposition of Carol Iannone's CV and the ad from her National Association of Scholars (June 1991). Nothing could better have represented the intellectual hypocrisy of the extremist Right than, in light of Iannone's accomplishments, the ad's call for the need "to evaluate each individual on the basis of personal achievement and promise."

Nothing except, perhaps, how Iannone's own words in *Commentary* (March 1991) illuminate her nomination to the National Council on the Humanities:

> Once the paradigm of a society based on the idea of individual merit... we have increasingly become subject to a tribalism of our own, and the concomitant assault on the ethic of excellence and merit has affected not only the world of American politics but virtually every area of society, including, perhaps most astonishingly, literature and the arts.

When a candidate for a job feels compelled to list "program notes at Thalia Theatre" as a publication of significance, that may evoke pathos. When it involves a nominee for the humanities council, that is reason for outrage.

Paul Lauter, *New York, New York*

AIDS AND THEORY

I appreciated the essay on "AIDS & Theory" (June 1991) but have just one brief comment. Why is it that critics cannot see how different strategies serve different functions? Daniel Harris at times shows understanding of ACT UP's strategies, and yet ends up devaluing them as if the fact that ACT UP focuses on the level of discursive constitution of AIDS means that others who fight for more beds in hospitals lose out. One could argue that the more kinds of actions undertaken—the more varied the strategies employed—the better the hope of stimulating a response from society.

In addition, it is possible that confronting how AIDS is constituted discursively may lead to the provision of more beds. Daniel Harris does not explore the links between the level of discourse and the level of policy that produces beds; he mistakenly assumes no connection.

E. Ann Kaplan, *Professor, English and Comparative Studies, SUNY Stony Brook*

It is difficult to understand what could have motivated Daniel Harris to write such a misbegotten critique of AIDS activism as the one he produced recently for your magazine. I seriously doubt that his motivation had anything to do either with a commitment to "reforming" the political environment in which issues of health care, insurance, and medical funding are decided or with raising public awareness of the very real social issues behind the disease. Nevertheless, he feels compelled to criticize those who have made efforts to educate others not just about the specifics of the disease but also about the way it is used and manipulated by the media (as a journalist himself, Harris is tellingly silent about the latter; instead he writes exasperatedly about ACT UP's "outflanking of the media" which "in [his] view, hobbled the movement").

Harris's invidious attack instead draws upon the currently popular and reactionary attacks on "postmodernism" as a way of shaping a new stick with which to beat both academics and AIDS activists alike. Academics are vulgar, sedentary careerists for whom the disease is "a blessing in disguise," while their activist counterparts are interested in grandstanding and dominating rather than reforming. What Harris overlooks (perhaps what he wills out of sight) is the fact that the familiar boundaries between academic isolation and political activism are being questioned again on both sides—academics do engage in hands-on AIDS political work (a number of the "sedentary" critics Harris mocks not only write articles but are involved in more direct actions as well), and political organizations are remembering the importance and significance of education and instruction. I've known a number of serious gay activists in my time and not one of them deserves Harris's callous insult that we "display a desperate insistence on being accepted, and hence validated." That this remark is uniquely homophobic hardly goes without saying—Harris would never venture such a comment about African-Americans, women, or ethnic minorities, but given the political climate of the 1990s such a comment about gay activists is still fair game.

Finally, no one who writes political criticism of the AIDS epidemic claims to "redefine an entire medical crisis so that [he or she] can become its central player, arbiter, and expert." We are merely trying to become involved so that we help our dying brothers and sisters.

Gary Spear, *English Department, Wesleyan University*

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Field *Notes*

ALMA MATER ON THE LOVE LINE

THERE ONCE WAS A TIME (or so we like to think) when college presidents displayed profiles and principles that, like their portraits, were always suitable for framing. But now it seems that the best a prez can say for himself is: "I've been framed!" And sometimes he can't even say that. Last year, for example, Richard Berendzen had to resign the presidency of American University after having acknowledged making obscene telephone calls to various women from the protected confines of his lavish administrative office. A month later, James B. Holderman, president of the University of South Carolina, was forced to resign amid charges of some rather baroque spending practices, including fund-raising trips with stopovers in $800-a-night hotel rooms. Shortly after these revelations came the well-publicized embarrassment of Stanford's Donald Kennedy for his having mulcted (or is it mulched?) taxpayer money in order to spread it liberally over his flower beds and the school yacht. Now, as if all this were not enough, we have the case of Steven Altman, the married, forty-something president of the University of Central Florida, who gave up his post after local newspapers revealed that in 1990 he had patronized various escort services while on university business in Washington, Atlanta, Tallahassee, Tampa, and Miami—the now infamous Many-Hands-Make-Light-Work Tour. (Ads for one of the services—"Adventures"—promised "quality fantasy.")

For his own part, Altman claimed that he had "a history of receiving massage therapy for stress, fatigue, and tightness in his back." Right. Believe that and we have a grant proposal for you, tentatively titled "The University President: From Big Shot to Mug Shot." Budget details later.

—*R. J. Lambrose*

SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL

AS 1990 DREW TO A CLOSE, the Marquis de Sade finally made it out of prison, and in grand style: from the Bastille straight up to the Pantheon. The Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, the most prestigious literary collection in France, began publishing his works—not the complete works but the naughty ones that made his reputation: *120 Days of Sodom* in the first volume, to be followed in volumes two and three by *Justine, La Nouvelle Justine, Juliette,* and *Philosophy in the Bedroom.* (The first volume also contains *Aline and Valcour,* a "clean" epistolary novel in the tradition of Richardson, and the philosophical essay, "Dialogue Between a Priest and a Dying Man.")

Go into any Paris bookstore now and you'll find the new addition to the Pléiade library nestled placidly in a glass case, Ronsard and Rousseau on one side, Saint-Exupéry on the other. Not only has the flock of classics closed ranks around the interloper, it has obligingly lent him the proper clothes: Bible paper and fine leather. But some French writers are saying the new edition of Sade may be a wolf in cow's binding, for, whatever its considerable literary merits, *120 Days of Sodom* is without a doubt one of the most obscene works ever written, a novel from hell, the ne plus ultra of pornography.

The story of four libertines who shut themselves into a remote fortress with four storytellers and assorted underage victims, *Sodom* aims to catalogue every perversion imaginable, and damn near succeeds. Written on one continuous roll of paper (an image befitting the coprophiliac obsessions of his work) in 1785, during Sade's Bastille imprisonment, *Sodom* was lost during his

DOUBLE TAKE

The following Editor's Note appeared in the July 11, 1991, edition of The New York Times:

AN ARTICLE ON JULY 3 DESCRIBED A CONTROVERSY INVOLVING ALLEGATIONS of plagiarism at Boston University's College of Communication. In a commencement address in May, the dean of the college, H. Joachim Maitre, repeated virtually word for word passages from an article by a PBS film critic. In the speech, Mr. Maitre did not acknowledge or credit the article.

The Times account acknowledged that the controversy had first been reported in The Boston Globe on July 2. But it should also have noted that the quotations it cited from Mr. Maitre's speech were taken from the Globe article.

Besides the quotations from Mr. Maitre's speech, the Times article included a passage of five paragraphs that closely resembled five paragraphs in the Globe article. The passage involved comparisons of the same sets of quotations from the disputed texts. Although the Times article also reflected independent investigation of the controversy and interviews by the Times reporter, it was in this instance improperly dependent on the Globe account.

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lifetime and not published until 1904, not so much as a work of literature but as a kind of *psychopathia sexualis.* A proper edition was established by Maurice Heine in the 1930s, but as late as 1957, Jean-Jacques Pauvert was being prosecuted by French courts for his edition of Sade's works.

"The Pléiade is supposed to publish only prestigious authors," muses Pauvert in the January *Magazine littéraire,* a popular literary monthly. "But Sade is something else, a phenomenon of nature, the sea, the Himalayas. He cannot be rendered banal." Philippe Sollers, in the same issue, produces a brief passage from *Sodom* in which cannibalism, torture, sodomy, and murder all put in an appearance. Then he exclaims with mock disbelief: "That [such horrors] could be legitimized by a serious publisher in a prestigious collection is an event that says a great deal about the crisis in our society." Sollers wonders whether this crisis means that, "from this moment on, words no longer have any importance at all."

This may be what the Marquis intended all along. But generations of French intellectuals have weighed in with their own opinions on the matter: Klossowski, whose admiring gaze transformed Sade into a kind of crypto-Catholic; Bataille, who celebrated the transgressivity of the divine Marquis; Blanchot, who saw in Sade yet another writer dangling from a line of prose over the Blanchotian void of writing; and a new generation, led by Barthes, who disarm the author of *120 Days of Sodom* once and for all by turning him into a rhetorician par excellence—each de trop into a trope, each corpse a mere figure of speech.

THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

With its throat-clearing, justificatory introduction (Sade is a writer, damn it—that's why he's here), the Pléiade has its own, subtler agenda. As with all critical editions, the task of the editors is presented humbly as a cleanup job, but dismantle the intellectual scaffolding around Sade, wipe away the dreck deposited by all his detractors, in uniform and out, dissolve the patina of textual errors and lacunae, and what's left is a shiny, brand-new literary monument, almost fit for any public square. This is all very well and beautifully done, but who, one wonders, is stronger in the end, Sade or the Pléiade? Does the supple leather binding around the Marquis take on a subversive, not to say fetishistic, texture—*"la volupté de lire,"* as the Pléiade's advertising slogan has it—or is it merely the strap that keeps the straitjacket in place?

—Jean-Christophe Castelli

IN FROM THE COLD

WHILE ONE MIGHT HAVE expected the end of the Cold War to have allayed the last lingering urge of patriot-scholars to put themselves at the service of the nation's "intelligence community," the reverse seems to be true—at least in upstate New York. Only last year, G. Dennis O'Brien, philosopher-president of the University of Rochester, toyed openly with the possibility of his university's running a multimillion-dollar, Washington-based intelligence think tank (the Intelligence Research Center) to serve the CIA, military intelligence, and the National Security Council. According to William Riker, Rochester political scientist and champion of the IRC plan, the brief for this updated model of the New Mandarinism grew out of the misbegotten estimates of Soviet economic and military strength that the CIA had put out right up to the collapse of the Berlin Wall. The way to eliminate such miscalculations, Riker argued, was to privatize the agency's intelligence-gathering activities by shifting those responsibilities into the capable hands of outside consultants like, oh, for example, himself. By so doing, the government would avoid the kind of self-serving findings that the CIA's in-house estimates had traditionally generated. Everyone would benefit, of course.

The goal was to "encourage... faculty and students to interact with [the] CIA on information exchange."

Interestingly, while the University of Rochester was mulling over this tantalizing possibility, the Rochester Institute of Technology was already hard at work implementing it. Last June, we learned that the institute's president, M. Richard Rose, had just completed a low-profile, four-month sabbatical spent working for the CIA as a contract consultant for R.I.T. Research Corporation, a "profit-making entity of the institute" conveniently located in Langley, Virginia.

Why Rose bothered with such distancing devices as spin-offs and sabbaticals is

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Field *Notes*

something of a mystery, since he had already approved—some six years ago—a ten-page memorandum of agreement with the CIA authorizing a far more intimate relationship. According to this document, the goal was to "establish/enhance the RIT curriculum to be responsive to certain defined technical specialties of CIA" and to "encourage and stimulate the appropriate faculty and students to interact with CIA on information exchange, project support and potential employment."

As if to compound Rose's difficulties, these revelations followed upon the disclosure of a controversial report on the Japanese economy ("Japan 2000") that the RIT spin-off had produced under Rose's imprimatur. The report pictured Japan as "an immoral, manipulative and controlling culture" out to dominate the globe by means of its economic power. To be sure, this conviction was neither new nor secret, but it was awkward indeed for RIT, given the strenuous efforts the institute was then making to lure those same immoral, manipulative, and controlling yen into its own coffers.

And therein lies the dilemma for presidents of modern, global, conglomerate universities in the Age of Cutbacks: a problem less of pigging out than of digging in. For when donations are as scarce as truffles, it's hard to know just where to put one's snout.

—*R. J. Lambrose*

VENI, VIDI ... VIDEO

HERE'S HIGHER EDUCATION'S latest salvo in the bidding wars for new students: college promotional tapes in your local video store. Last fall, Blockbuster, a megachain with franchises in malls across America, began offering a wide selection of college videos in several of its northeast stores for $1 to $2 per rental. If the program flies, look for the idea to go nationwide, says Carl Allen, president of Preview, Inc., which packages the videos. Colleges have been making these advertisements for their educational "resources" since the early eighties, offering them to high schools or prospective freshmen, and students have been able to order them directly from distributors. But this is the first time college admissions has really donned its P .T. Barnum hat and decided to peddle some serious product.

Where's the dusk-to-dawn bender that culminates in an epiphany or an embarrassing spectacle outside the dean's house?

To those of us not in the

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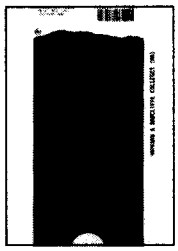
throes of SAT panic, the videos may be viewed as updated versions of how the American college is selling itself to education consumers. There was always a college sell, of course, but it was more genteel and Anglophile: velvety green lawns to evoke the campus pastoral; Frisbees to suggest carefree youth; bow-tied profs and attentive students to symbolize the redeeming qualities of the large lecture course; buxom girls in alpaca sweaters to represent, oh, the frustrations of the fruitless slap and tickle in some darkened movie theater.



Now, instead of just Frisbees, there's a jogger prancing picturesquely in the dappled early morning sunlight. Instead of the Ken and Barbie types of yore, there's a happy, *sharing,* multi-culti-klatch of students arranged in a proper demographic array. And instead of old appeals to school pride, there's a new emphasis on comfort—like the Keds sneakers in the new advertisment, college today just *feels* good. "See how comfortable you *feel,*" says a voice-over in the Harvard production, which features slides of people grinning desperately at one another. A professor in the University of California, Santa Cruz, video gushes about chummy teacher-student relationships. "I feel," he says, "as if I'm part of the same living organism that they are." (Santa Cruz, by the way, is one of the most popular videos: "It's the whimsical browsing factor," says Preview's Carl Allen.)

There's also some lip service paid to the fact that most students now view college as an economic proposition: A University of Michigan graduate, for example, ingenuously tells us that because he had a Big Blue degree, an employer "hired me over fifteen other applicants."

But a high-school senior might frown at the PG-ness of it all. Where's the explosion of adolescent sexual energy? Where's the evidence of youthful (later to be excused) dabbling in controlled substances? Where's the dusk-to-dawn bender that culminates in a profound epiphany or an embarrassing spectacle outside the dean's house? Where, for that matter, is the queue outside the office of the campus shrink?

To sell college by video, you've really got to have a pulsating beat—and maybe some spandex. Luckily, B. Ann Wright, Smith's new dean of enrollment and a pioneer of the college video form, assures us such MTV-inspired product may not be long in coming. "There has been a real move toward particular kinds of music, even some song and dance stuff," she says. "Whatever the public wants."

—Michael Hirschorn

MALE-ORDER IMMORTALITY

NOW ACADEMIC CELEBRITY COMES ON TAPE, TOO. THE Teaching Company, a mail-order outfit based in Rosslyn, Virginia, is marketing to readers of *The New York Times,* the *New York Review of Books, The New Yorker, The Atlantic Monthly,* and *Harper's Magazine* a great-lectures series on everything from the Greeks to murder mysteries. (Videotapes cost up to $150; audiotapes go as high as $90 per course.)

Who gets to appoint professors to such immortality? According to Thomas M. Rollins, founder of the company and former chief counsel to Senator Edward Kennedy, students do. The Teaching Company has taped lecturers from both ends of the political spectrum: Alan Charles Kors, a University of Pennsylvania history professor and member of the National Association of Scholars, as well as Marshall (Rick) Roderick from Duke University's philosophy department, a social theorist who deems himself, only half-jokingly, an anarcho-syndicalist dedicated to the academy's overthrow. But Rollins, who pays his professors advances and royalties, says he picks lecturers strictly on the basis of published student evaluations. "All we want are people who are great at teaching," he says. "But the professors we've located through student evaluations do tend to be outstanding scholars in their field."

Looks like students aren't all that keen on female profs, though: there are none on the Teaching Company's fifteen-professor-long list, a fact which Rollins ruefully acknowledges. "We are avidly, to the exclusion of much else, looking for female faculty for the program," he says.

FOR GOD, FOR COUNTRY—AND FOR KAGAN?

LIKE ANY GOOD DEAN OF A liberal arts college, dean of Yale College Donald Kagan has strong feelings about his school's humanities scholars. Strong negative feelings. A man who can shape tenure committees with a simple recommendation to university president Benno Schmidt, Kagan prefers scientists. "I don't know a single natural scientist who does not believe in the efficacy of reason, or the possibility of truth arrived at through reason," he told a hall full of National Association of Scholars conventioneers in the summer of 1990. "On the other hand, the woods are full of humanists who doubt those things." To remedy this lamentable state of affairs, the dean, a specialist in ancient Greek military history, suggested "increasing the number and percentage of your faculty who believe in reason and truth."

Dean Kagan turns out to be a man of his word, or so some Yale professors charge. They say Kagan's speech, published last winter in the NAS organ, *Academic Questions,* lays out a blueprint for Yale—and a sure path to disaster for an institution that could once claim many of the best humanities departments in the world.

It may be sheer coincidence that, since Kagan gave the speech, no junior professor in the humanities has been promoted to tenure. Yale lacks an automatic tenure track, and competition for sparse

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senior positions is invariably fierce. But Kagan alarmed Yale's faculty in yet another way. Explaining why he had not tried to institute a core curriculum, which he strongly favors, Kagan exclaimed, "Consider what a core constructed by the current faculty would look like." The implication was clear: Kagan would be delighted if a different faculty—one, say, better disposed toward *his* idea of a core curriculum—were somehow to materialize. With the additional tension of cutbacks and a committee on restructuring announcing the elimination of 60 out of some 660 faculty positions in the humanities, the tenure debate now plumbs unusually bitter depths.

Donald Kagan

The case most frequently cited as proof of some sort of an antihumanities master plan was particularly unpleasant. By the time film studies junior professor David Rodowick, who had been chosen from a national candidate pool, came up for tenure, he had published one book and had another coming out. A popular teacher and administrator—he almost single-handedly nurtured Yale's fledgling film studies program to maturity—he could moreover boast strong letters of recommendation and the unanimous backing of both the American Studies and the often fractious Comparative Literature departments. "It was very clear that David was outstanding," says Michael Holquist, a Slavicist who participated in the search. "That, combined with his work in building the [film studies] major, made his appointment seem to us ineluctable."

Rodowick, however, had one strike against him: he had been singled out for ridicule by NAS honcho Peter Shaw, in an article in *Academic Questions* that appeared last summer and attacked, among other "radical" disciplines, film studies. Shaw's beef with the field? Its methodology, he claimed, "boils down to the familiar and old-fashioned Marxist fixing of blame."

Rodowick's denial of tenure last December so upset faculty members that even the French department's usually restrained Peter Brooks complained. "It was clearly a decision made as a judgment on film theory itself and not on the merits of Rodowick's work in film theory," says Brooks. "I think the people on the committee didn't particularly know or appreciate his work."

There is, of course, no direct evidence that members of the tenure committee read Shaw's article. It was reportedly the prose of Rodowick's book, a dense intellectual history of film theory, that turned his wouldn't-be peers off. "There were a number of people who found the book impenetrable," says one member of the administration close to the Kagan camp. (Kagan refused to speak to *LF* for this article.)

The tenure committee did review Rodowick's case; they turned him down again. Comp Lit chairman David Marshall, who presented Rodowick's case the second time, remarks, "I do think it's a dangerous situation when you have nonexperts overruling not only the departmental experts but outside experts."

But Deputy Provost Charles Long denies that the tenure committee's decisions follow a pattern. "There is no evidence for any agenda or any concerted effort by this committee against a particular kind of scholarship," he says.

And indeed, Kagan did seek tenure for at least one junior humanities scholar in the past year. Last fall his committee bestowed its increasingly rare blessing upon a junior classics professor, Richard Garner, described by several senior professors as Kagan's protégé. But when Yale's board of permanent officers, a body made up of tenured professors, met to issue the final, and usually pro forma, seal of approval (gathering, by coincidence, on the same day that the tenure committee met to vote on the Rodowick candidacy, a day already famous in Yale folklore as "Bloody Thursday"), irregularities emerged.

It seems the classics department had conducted no national search and got up a rather hasty departmental vote. Worse, no "blind letters" had been mailed to Garner's peers soliciting an objective evaluation of his status in the field—a step considered de rigueur in the tenuring process. Exercised, and exercising a rarely used option, the officers overruled the committee and returned Garner to the ever swelling ranks of the great untenured.

"It's a dangerous situation when you have nonexperts overruling not only the departmental experts but outside experts."

Yale University Office of Public Information

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BREAKTHROUGH BOOKS

Recently, we asked five specialists in intelligence and security studies to tell us about the most provocative and important book published during the last few years in their field. Here are their responses.

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David Wise, former Washington bureau chief of the *New York Herald Tribune* and author of nine books on intelligence, including *The Spy Who Got Away* (Random House, 1988):

James Bamford, *The Puzzle Palace: A Report on America's Most Secret Agency* (Penguin, 1983). "It was a breakthrough in writing about communications intelligence. This book stands as a monument; it hasn't been challenged. It pulled aside the curtain of secrecy about an agency even more secret than the CIA. Nobody really knew very much about what the National Security Agency did, how many people worked for it, what their missions were, how it was organized, what their listening stations were around the world, what their budget was like. The entire picture of the agency had never before been described."

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Walter Laqueur, chairman of the International Research Council at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and author of *World of Secrets: The Uses and Limits of Intelligence* (Basic, 1985):

David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception in the Second World War* (Biblio. Dist., 1989). "It's a highly technical history, covering 1941 through 1944, but it's very thorough and is based on a wide range of everything published, including lots of stuff which is not easily accessible. It's not sensationalist."

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Thomas Powers, author of *The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA* (Knopf, 1979):

Tom Mangold, *Cold Warrior—James Jesus Angleton: The CIA's Master Spy Hunter* (Simon & Schuster, 1991). "A book about James Angleton, the former head of counterintelligence at the CIA, one of the leading figures in American intelligence and an extremely divisive one. He had been intellectually seduced by a Russian defector named Anatoliy Golitsyn, and Mangold presents a wealth of material showing how, as a result he believed that the Soviets were penetrating our counterintelligence right and left."

Mangold, says Powers, paints a strong and frightening picture of spies so reliant upon, and so misled by, one another, that they never connect with any "reality checks." "Golitsyn and Angleton together," he adds, "were a dangerous combination of a passionate nature."

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David P. Calleo, Dean Acheson Professor and Director of European Studies at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies and author of *Beyond American Hegemony: The Future of the Western Alliance* (Basic, 1987):

Richard H. Ullman, *Securing Europe* (Princeton, 1991). "A book that tries to raise the issue of what sort of security system should Europe have in the long run, of whether NATO is eternal, of what it should be in the long run. Ullman has been around for a while and he is very thoughtful."

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Roy Godson, professor of government at Georgetown University and coordinator of the Consortium for the Study of Intelligence:

A. N. Shulsky, *Silent Warfare: Understanding the World of Intelligence* (Pergamon-Brasseys, 1991). The book, says Godson, is the first comprehensive survey of intelligence to incorporate "the great revelations of the 1970s" emanating from several countries, particularly England and the United States. "A plethora of information came out that now allows us to put intelligence studies on the same level in the academy as politics and government, information that gave us a basis for comparison and generalization."

The book, which Godson believes will soon become the standard introduction to the field, outlines the "four elements of intelligence—collection, analysis, counterintelligence, and covert action. Shulsky also discusses a particularly American aspect of the field—the relationship between secret intelligence and a democracy, how to address that incompatibility. He also addresses an important theoretical issue: the difference between information and intelligence. Most people think intelligence is simply information, but he points out that it is actually *secret* information, and that the point of intelligence is getting, protecting, and using *secret* information to promote government activities." LF

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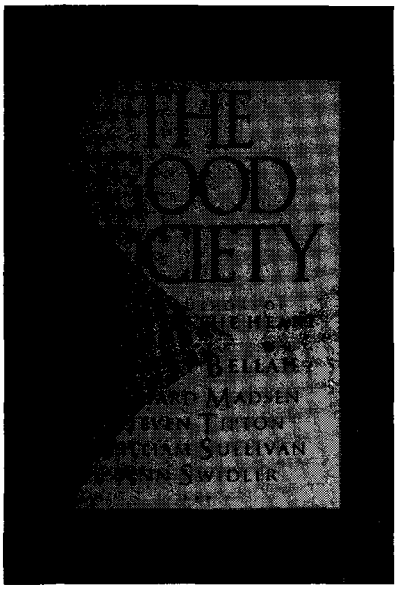
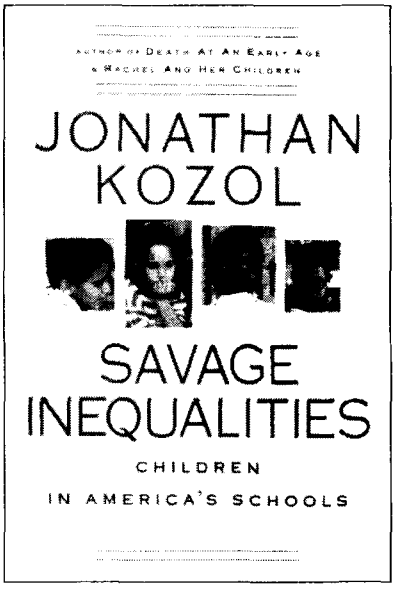
NEW WORKS ON EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

FROM RANDOM HOUSE, INC.





Bellah, Robert N., Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton
THE GOOD SOCIETY

As America moves its domestic, economic, and social crises to the top of the political agenda, the authors of the acclaimed *Habits of the Heart* propose a new response to the country's growing social ills. Emphasizing that we all live in and through institutions—family, school, community, corporation, religious group, the nation—Bellah and his coauthors show how we can and must take responsibility for making these institutions work, and thereby take responsibility for ourselves. The authors argue that a shared understanding of the common good can lead to a truly effective democracy and that public discourse and debate about our national problems must be renewed and enriched.
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Kozol, Jonathan
SAVAGE INEQUALITIES
Children in America's Schools

Examining public schools across the United States, from St. Louis and New York, San Antonio and Chicago to Washington, D.C., and Camden, New Jersey, the National Book Award-winning author of *Death at an Early Age* and *Rachel and Her Children* discovers the children of America's poor condemned to schools that are underfunded, understaffed, physically crumbling, and imbued with despair. Kozol places much of the blame for America's continuing "separate but unequal" public schools on the local funding structure that ensures a direct connection between the affluence of a community and the quality of the education its children receive.
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Cary, Lorene
BLACK ICE
An Autobiography

From the perspective of professional achievement as a writer and educator, the author recounts her experiences as a fifteen-year-old from Philadelphia in 1971 becoming one of the first black and female students to attend a newly co-educational and integrated St. Paul's boarding school—a longtime bastion of white male privilege.
A Knopf Book/$20.00/256pp./
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Inside *Publishing*

RESALE VALUES

Why do some scholarly articles crop up in anthologies everywhere, while others wither away in eternal oblivion? Is critical canon formation a matter of genius, timeliness, authorial prestige, trendiness, felicitous journal placement—or, as Rutgers University Press humanities editor Leslie Mitchner would have it, at least partly a function of the reprint costs?

University presses are consistently inconsistent in the way they price the articles and chapter excerpts that make up an anthology's standard fare. The tags can range from nothing to more than $800 for a twenty-five-page essay, or $30 a page for a book excerpt. That, says Mitchner, makes some works more affordable—and therefore more usable—than others. "There are some university presses that give away the rights to the author's works without even consulting the author," she says. "There are others that are just looking to make money for themselves and they don't care if the author begs and pleads with them to let the piece be reprinted for less." (What would Mitchner consider an appropriate amount? One figure she ventured at the American Association of University Presses meeting this summer was $300 an essay.)

For example, the editors of *Feminisms,* an anthology of contemporary feminist theory forthcoming in November from Rutgers, found themselves excluding some of the best work for the worst reasons. "We wanted it to be representative of all approaches," says coeditor Robyn Warhol, a professor of English at the University of Vermont. "But because our press could only give us limited financial support, we had to exclude certain pieces." Among those excluded desirables was a chapter from film theoretician Teresa De Lauretis's *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Indiana University Press). Warhol and her coeditor also had to settle for an abridged chapter of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's classic *Madwoman in the Attic: A Study of Women & Literary Imagination* (Yale University Press). On both of the above, the per-page costs were simply too high. And those were not, moreover, the most expensive presses the *Feminisms* editors dealt with; Warhol said she found that the University of Chicago and Oxford University presses consistently charged the most, in the range of $700 to $800 per essay, a complaint echoed by editors of several other critical anthologies. Perry Cartwright, Chicago's permissions editor, denied that his company had a firm pricing policy: "Granting permission to people is not a black and white issue. We are always glad to look at things in a different way."

Other presses adopt an attitude of generous disregard—both for profit and, at times, for the author's wishes. Princeton University Press, for example, simply gave the *Feminisms* editors a chapter of feminist literary scholar Elaine Showalter's book, *A Literature of Their Own,* for free. And when the journal *Radical America* and its publisher, Ablex, granted the *Feminisms* editors the reprint rights (at $10 a page) for an essay by Hazel Carby, a specialist in African-American studies, they did not run the idea by Carby first. "As holders of the copyright," she later angrily wrote Warhol, "the editors of *Radical America* have totally disregarded my wishes." Given the chance, Carby continued, she would have withheld her piece from the anthology, which she said did not make enough of an effort to seek out work by young black scholars. (The editors said they received Carby's letter too late to withdraw the piece from the book.)

MISSING MISSING LINKS

What does an existentialist do at the end of one world order and on the begining of another? Call for the death penalty, that's what, or at least that's what Albert Camus did as editor-in-chief of the French Resistance newspaper *Combat* at the end of World War II. Camus's postliberation hard line toward *collabos* sits ill with his later opposition to capital punishment, which is why, in 1986, Wesleyan undergraduate Alexandre de Gramont decided to translate Camus's

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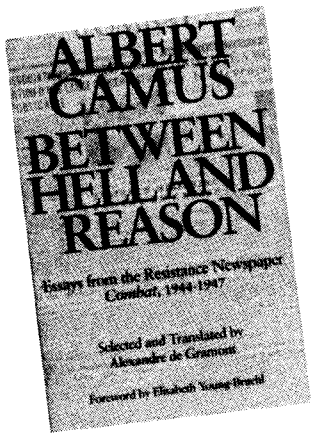

ALBERT CAMUS
BETWEEN HELL AND REASON
Essays from the Resistance Newspaper Combat, 1944-1947
Selected and Translated by Alexandre de Gramont
Foreword by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl

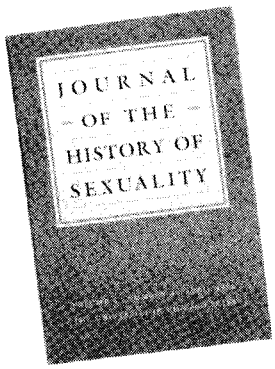
unsigned *Combat* editorials as his senior project. The editorials, forty-one of which will be published in English for the first time in September by Wesleyan University Press, trace Camus's initial attraction to, and eventual disillusionment with, execution as a political solution.

The editorials "seemed to me to constitute a 'missing link' between Camus's pre- and post-war work, to explain why Camus's major concern shifted from suicide in *The Myth of Sisyphus* to murder in *The Rebel*," wrote de Gramont in the preface.

But twelve of the articles that militate most strongly for the death penalty have been left out of the book, victims of a battle between de Gramont and Camus's estate. (De Gramont replaced them with others that made a weaker case.) "The main objection was that the twelve articles hadn't been definitively established as being written by Camus, and the Camus estate was willing to recognize only those articles that Camus had subsequently published in Gallimard editions," de Gramont, who is now a lawyer, tells *LF*. "But Camus had identified two of those articles as his to his biographers, and other scholars identified eleven out of the twelve. They were very passionate, very raw pieces, and I was sorry to let them go."

Wesleyan professor Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, who advised de Gramont on the project and wrote a foreword to the book, says she suspects the Camus estate suppressed the articles because they were simply too vehement. "The result of the act is censorship," she says. "And, of course, completely self-defeating, because it just arouses interest."

ALL SEXED UP AND EVERYWHERE TO GO



"People are still having sex," as DJ-turned-rock-star Latour points out in a music video of the same name. And in the overcrowded market of academic journals, people are still paying an unusual amount of attention to the *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, a quarterly edited at Bard College and appearing from the University of Chicago Press last year.

Just because it has "sexuality" in the title?

No, says Robert Schnucker, editor of *Editing History*, a newsletter for history journal editors. "It's the publicity."

Some of the journal's outreach was traditional academic stuff—letters to scholars, paper-scouting rounds at conferences, and ads exchanged with other journals. But the real juice came from a far less conventional source: Howard J. Rubenstein Associates, Manhattan's most influential P.R. agency and the flacks for Donald Trump, British press mogul (and new *Daily News* owner) Robert Maxwell, and the Carnegie Deli (for which the agency once created a chopped-liver Statue of Liberty).

When it took on the journal's account, the agency already had a long-term relationship with Bard College. Bard's director of public relations, Danielle Woerner, pooled the college's contact lists with those of Rubenstein and even used the agency's letterhead for the initial mailing. News of the periodical circled the globe on United Press International and Associated Press wires, yielding articles in everything from *The Times of London Literary Supplement* to *USA Today*. "Scholarly journals aren't usually sent to this department," wrote the momentarily baffled *Washington Post* magazine critic, Charles Trueheart, "but for some reason a brand-new academic quarterly, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, was."

Fast-track P.R. (and titillating title) aside, the journal is a perfectly scholarly publication founded by Bard professor John C. Fout, a specialist in the history of German sexuality, when he couldn't figure out where to place his cross-disciplinary articles. The journal's masthead includes names like Yale scholar John Boswell *(The Kindness of Strangers)* and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg *(Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America)*. The table of contents of the April 1991 issue lists articles on obese Rabbinical-era rabbis, 19th-century American polygamy, and comparative representations of homosexuality.

And one year later? The current list of subscribers—numbering a respectable, if not startling, 1,500—includes Planned Parenthood and a host of M.D.'s and is about one-third foreign. Of course, there were also the wannabe sex scholars turned on by the title and turned off by the tone. "We even got one postcard from a motel asking us for more information," says assistant editor Susan Rogers.

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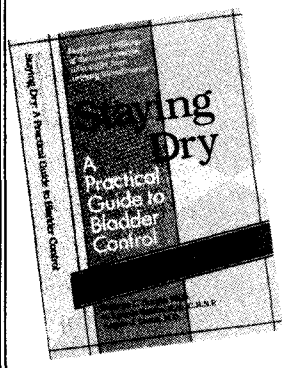
Inside *Publishing*

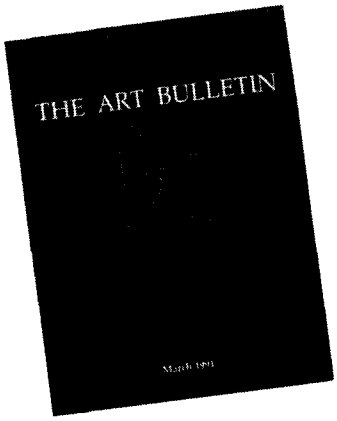
GOLDEN SHOWERS



Media maneuvering also ensured this year's scholarly-publishing success story, The Johns Hopkins University Press's *Staying Dry: A Practical Guide to Bladder Control.* The book, a five-step cure for incontinence, was thrown back by forty-nine commercial houses before it washed up on JHUP's shores. Selling more than 100,000 copies and earning more than a million dollars in a year won it the American Association of University Presses Golden Fluke Award. The award is named after a flatfish also known as a "summer flounder" and was "devised," according to the presenter, University of Tennessee Press director Carol Wallace Orr, "to recognize uncreative and noninnovative—but lucrative—publishing."

This time, Ann Landers was the capitalist tool of choice. JHUP's marketing director sent Landers the book, Landers endorsed it, and 18,000 orders, checks enclosed, popped through JHUP's mail slot more or less the next day. JHUP then alerted the press, and two local newspapers—*The Baltimore Sun* and the *Washington Post*—did stories, not, of course, on the book itself but on the Ann Landers sales phenomenon—which immediately propelled the book's authors onto national talk shows and its sales figures into the best-seller stratosphere. All this although JHUP opted for the dryest of all possible titles; among others floated before publication were "The Better Bladder Book," "You're in Control," and "Taking Care of Number One."

ARTFUL REVISIONS



Journals are usually established by scholars with a common critical or historical bent, or at least some shared enthusiasms. But when the journal in question is that of a national association with thousands of members, how can it speak for all of them? And when it tries, does it risk becoming hopelessly bland?

That's a question many members of the College Art Association (membership: 12,000 individuals and 1,200 institutions) have been asking about their association's quarterly, *The Art Bulletin.* Some of them call it "*The New York Times* of the art historical world," but others—citing its devotion to connoisseurship and seeming obliviousness to multiculturalism, feminism, and "the new art history"—call it "the journal from Never-Never Land." In seventy-eight years of continuous publication, the large-format periodical with black-and-white reproductions and single-color covers has acquired a reputation as mainstream art scholarship's journal of record—and a stodgy, sluggish read.

Given the governance structure of the journal, its inertia should come as no surprise. Until this spring, the *Art Bulletin* editor—an individual with almost total control over its content—was selected by the editorial board, itself made up of past editors-in-chief, book review editors, and editors of the quarterly's monograph series. The selection process ensured, as one current editor put it, an uninterrupted flow of "Eastern establishment" types at the Bulletin's helm: scholars from the nation's top art history departments—Yale, Princeton, Harvard, New York University, and the University of Chicago.

Lately, though, the usual grumblings and dissatisfaction within the CAA rank-and-file—including agitation for greater control over its publications—have been escalating, and the winds of multiculturalism and multiregionalism have finally come tap-tapping at the *Bulletin*'s door. Last fall, the nominations for positions on the editorial board were thrown open to the membership at large. Only eight people responded to the call, but out of that pool four were chosen. And they were from institutions not usually locatable on *The Art Bulletin*'s masthead: the University of Wisconsin, the University of Delaware, Duke, Brooklyn College, and the City University of New York. (Three members of the outgoing board also got to stay on for the next term.) The changes, however, are not permanent, and the new board will spend much of its time studying the nominating procedure and coming up with recommendations.

Not surprisingly, opinion differs widely on whether the new policy represents a thoroughgoing transformation or merely a pancake-deep make-over. At least one individual involved allegedly leveled personal attacks against the nominees (and declined to talk to *LF* about those allegations). Richard Brilliant, the new editor and a professor of Greek and Roman art

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and archaeology at Columbia, was openly disappointed by the small crop of nominees. "I don't like to say that the four we chose weren't good," he said. "But it would have been much better if we'd had thirty or forty" to choose from. And Richard Spear, a former editor and chairman of the new editorial board, is glad that the mills of change are grinding so slowly, since he's not sure they should grind at all.

But others, including book review editor Keith Moxey, think procedural changes were half-hearted at best. "If there was really a genuine desire to get these different perspectives into the magazine," said Moxey, "it would be easy enough to go out and solicit them."

WHAT DO EDITORS REALLY WANT?

COURTESY OF THE FOUND IMAGES COLLECTION LESBIAN HERSTORY ARCHIVES/L.H.E.F., INC.

For a discipline that's been sprouting scholarly press series like ivy vines on Ortho-Grow, gay and lesbian studies find surprisingly little quarter in the scholarly world itself. Universities such as Columbia, with its three-year-old lesbian and gay series, or the University of Chicago, with a forthcoming series on the history of sexuality, are a lot more likely to have G & L books at the press than in the classroom. Schools do offer more courses in the subject now than ever before, but only the City College of San Francisco offers an undergraduate major, and no graduate program awards a degree, not even the City University of New York's Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies—the only academically affiliated research center around.

So why do editors of gay and lesbian books—or works in sexuality or gender studies, as they're often called—seem so sanguine about the future of this barely blossomed field? Chalk it up not just to the pervasive legacy of Michel Foucault and the strategic significance of sexuality to cultural studies but to the fact that these books *sell*. Those critical, political folks who make up the activist lesbian and gay movement don't just talk up a storm—they read, and best of all, at least from an editor's perspective, they buy.

Given the strong off-campus readership, it's not surprising that editors would eye the trend toward academic G & L scholarship with both excitement and a certain rue. "They are getting more plentiful and I think they are finally getting better," says Joan Catapano, senior editor at Indiana University Press, of the G & L books Indiana has been publishing for years, many under the auspices of women's studies. "I think these books were like women's studies in the beginning: recovery books, angry explosions of pent-up frustration. But as they get more scholarly, they may also become less significant to the gay and lesbian community. The discussion may become incomprehensible to the general audience."

Catapano says she'd like to see more works by lesbian and gay social scientists: "There's a need for these kinds of studies—sociological, anthropological—from a gay perspective because [gays] have always been viewed as the outsiders. You have a number of historical works—by [Martin] Duberman, by John D'Emilio, by [Martha] Vicinus—and you're at a point now where you need the interpretive texts. It's time for theory building. But scholars have to be careful that they don't become elitist and isolate themselves."

David Bartlett, director of Temple University Press and president of AAUP, agrees that "there has to be a switch away from the notion that gays and lesbians form an interesting group to be studied" but adds, "people should be looking at the institutionalized causes of homophobia. I call it the 'what's wrong with heterosexuals approach.' "

Specifically, Bartlett would like to see books on (1) religion, or "the nature of the socialization that creates homophobia in children," (2) adolescent sexuality, or "what can be done for gays and lesbians in high schools," and (3) law. "A whole range of books could be written on the law and its negative impact on gay people," he says. Bartlett also envisions a series of books taking on the "essentialist versus social constructionist debate, the argument over whether homosexuality is a biologically or socially determined category."

Routledge's fall catalogue offers a wealth of studies on feminist theory, transvestism, and gender ambiguity, including Marjorie Garber's *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety*. The press also launched a new men's studies series called "Male Orders," and editorial director William Germano is avid for works that "figure out what male sexuality is." He adds, "Historically, we developed out of a very, very strong list in women's studies and lit

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crit." Germano wants to broaden the scope; one book he hopes will do that is feminist scholar Kaja Silverman's forthcoming work on male subjectivity and marginality. "I'm also very interested in questions of masculinity and race," he says. "Black male subjectivity and black sexuality. It's a very important concept to try to understand and not much has been written about it."

Lauren Bryant at Beacon Press is looking for books that trace the history of the American lesbian and gay movements. Bryant, like several other editors *LF* talked with, says she'd snap up books about homosexuality outside the United States in a minute—but that "as an editor and a publisher, I have to think about the marketplace. Americans can be an ethnocentric bunch and they are not always interested in reading about cultures other than their own. Within the gay and lesbian communities, that's different, because they're simply more progressive. But still, it would have to be something that's comparative, that enables readers to reflect upon the difference between American gay culture and gay cultures in other countries." Lf

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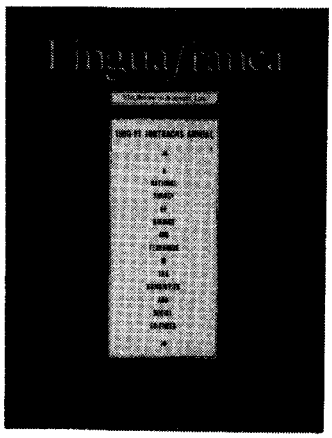

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Crossover DREAMS

WHAT ACADEMICS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT AGENTS AND THE LITERARY MARKETPLACE

Continued from the cover

However many hackles Cantor's suggestions may have raised in university publishing circles, they also spoke to every academician's not-so-secret dream: to bridge the gap between the university and "real life," to discover that his or her ideas strike a chord not just within the discipline but in society at large. And it's not a pipe dream; such cultural crossovers occur frequently these days, as publishers, scholars, editors, and agents realize there is an unexpectedly broad audience for challenging, intellectual books along with those promising instant weight loss, fast bucks, and cheesy romance. Simon Schama, Jonathan Spence, Paul Kennedy, Albert Hourani, Allan Bloom, Harold Bloom, Deborah Tannen, Robert Reich, Stephen Hawking, Douglas Hofstadter, James McPherson, Peter Gay, Robert Bellah—many academics have published books in the past few years that have shown up, often inexplicably, on the best-seller lists.

Yes, it's an honest-to-goodness, let's-hear-it-for-the-ivory-tower trend. But before you overnight that beloved, belabored manuscript to the likes of Norton and Knopf, keep three things in mind: that the star system is even more ingrained in publishing than it is on campus, that academics and publishing types disagree profoundly on what makes a book "good," and that the process of getting a manuscript published by a trade house often comes with large doses of compromise, frustration, resentment, and even anger. For every book like Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* or Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* there are ten, twenty, thirty manuscripts that have vanished virtually without a trace—unpublished altogether, eviscerated during editing, or forgotten on publication.

So what's an academic author with crossover dreams to do? For many, the answer is plain: Get a literary agent. And generally speaking, if you can get an agent, you can sell your work, in some form, to a trade house. But the relationship among scholars, agents, and editors is a complex and sometimes vexed one, for each group has a different agenda and is skeptical, to some extent, of the others. To generalize in the grand fashion: Editors see agents as shortsighted and money-grubbing, agents see academics as defensive and unrealistic, while academics see editors as unappreciative and agents as superficial. There are exceptions to these stereotypes, of course, but the academic who is attuned to these mind-sets and to the sensitivities they create stands a better chance of getting an agent or editor interested in his or her work.

A (VERY) SHORT HISTORY OF ACADEMIC PUBLISHING

Fifty years ago, scholars and book editors shared the same general background and the same general view of the world; although nei-

BY CHRIS GOODRICH

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ACADEMICS OFTEN WRONGLY THINK "THEY HAVE TO CONDESCEND TO SUCCEED" IN THE TRADE BOOK MARKETPLACE.

ther objected if a book sold many copies and made the author famous, they wrote and published primarily to reach like-minded people. As times changed, however, so, dramatically, did the genteel academic/publisher compact: Conglomerates swallowed up individual publishers, who in turn became more and more oriented to the bottom line; academics became ever more specialized, careerist, and bound to the forms and language of their chosen disciplines. The publishing and academic paths, once parallel, diverged until they were separated by a yawning gulf. Editors began to regard academics as constitutionally incapable of writing well or addressing broad topics; scholars saw that trade publishing was suffering from what came to be known as the "blockbuster complex." By the mid-1970s the gap between these two cultures was obvious—and more and more literary agents recognized that they were in a good position to bridge it.

Many contemporary academics, of course, have maintained good relationships with commercial houses throughout their careers, sometimes aided by agents. Historians—storytellers since the days of Thucydides—and university-affiliated biographers have traditionally written for the general reader and thus been welcomed by trade publishing. Until recently, however, academics have been somewhat reluctant to get agents, for any number of reasons—because they didn't understand their role in the publishing process, didn't feel they should pay for advice (in the form of the agent's commission), feared the taint of lucre (or at least the appearance of such), or knew that many editors disliked working with agents.

Though diminished, the academic's ambivalence toward agents is still readily apparent. Raphael Sagalyn, a Washington, D.C.–based agent who represents a number of academics, including Harvard's Robert Reich and the University of Virginia's E. D. Hirsch, says he continues to be surprised at the disdain with which academics often treat nonacademics, which is to say, their prospective readership, since the agent is often the scholar's first nonacademic reader. "[Academics are] reaching for the golden ring, they want fame and fortune," Sagalyn says, "but they often think they need to go down-market—they write stuff that's boring and watered down. But the book audience is up-market, and you shouldn't be less vigorous with your ideas." This reality, he says, frequently comes as a shock to potential academic clients, who wrongly think "they have to condescend to succeed."

Glance at the best-selling authors mentioned above, however, and it's clear that isn't the case. Academics succeed in commercial publishing when they have something significant to say, and those who do are as likely to be "discovered" by an agent as by an editor. Because they are usually self-employed or work in a small shop, agents can be more independent and more willing to take the plunge with a first-time author of trade books.

"Editors are used to sitting at their desks waiting for stuff from agents," says Hugh Van Dusen, vice president and executive editor of HarperCollins's trade paperback line HarperPerennial (and exceptional among editors in that he has attended historical-association conferences for thirty years.) The editors' passivity has left the field open to agents, who know full well that publishers, having saturated bookstores with titles on just about every conceivable subject, remain desperate to sign up authors whose work can be trumpeted as authoritative or comprehensive or groundbreaking—anything that sets it apart from the pack. "Publishers want the best," says agent Carol Mann, whose best-known client these days may be San Jose State English professor Shelby Steele, "and that can be measured by credentials and experience."

WHAT AGENTS LOOK FOR (AND WHAT THEY CAN OFFER)

Sagalyn also touts the value of credentials in securing an advantageous publishing contract, and he calls the Nobel Prize "the ultimate credential." That's particularly true in the sciences, where enormous sums have recently been paid out: Last year both Murray Gell-Mann of Caltech (Nobel in physics, 1969) and Leon Lederman of the University of Chicago (Nobel in physics, 1988) signed high-six-figure book deals. (Gell-Mann was represented by John Brockman, the most prominent agent for scientists, and Lederman by Lynn Nesbit, known for representing writers of quality fiction as well as nonfiction. Both agents are based in New York City.) The Nobel Prize aside, though, few credentials will impress all agents all of the time. Twenty-five years ago, says Van Dusen, teaching at Harvard or Yale might have been enough, but not anymore.

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CROSSOVER DREAMS

Credentials are worthless if an author has nothing meaningful to say—and that's usually where academics fail to make the grade in trade-book publishing. Academics are no longer shy about hyping their work to commercial houses—"Now they're bold as brass," says Van Dusen—but too often it's a dry, uninspired manuscript, often a Ph.D. dissertation, on a narrow topic. "Most academics should not have an agent," says Sandy Dijkstra, probably best known as the agent of novelist Amy Tan, though one-quarter of her clients—including her husband, UC San Diego comparative literature professor Bram Dijkstra—are academics. "They write for university presses," she says, "and an agent couldn't help them." (Dijkstra is unusual among literary agents in that she holds a Ph.D.—in French literature, from UCSD. In fact, her own dissertation, *Flora Tristan and Feminism in the Age of George Sand,* will soon be published by London's Pluto Press, which discovered it, flukily enough, completely on its own.)

"THE DISSERTATION IS PROBABLY THE THING THAT FINALLY BEATS GOOD WRITING OUT OF YOU."

But even a manuscript on a subject of broad appeal, written by an academic with sterling credentials, may not interest an editor if it doesn't have a distinctive point of view. The nature of the point of view—radical, conservative, feminist—is much less important than its originality and accessibility—and thus, to the publisher, its promotability. It's in this realm that literary agents truly begin to earn their keep, for a good agent can help the author find the "voice" that academic prose so frequently muffles. Says Tom Lewis, professor of English at Skidmore and author of HarperCollins's forthcoming *Empire of the Air: The Men Who Made Radio,* "The dissertation is probably the thing that finally beats good writing out of you."

Even more important, the savvy agent knows which editors are likely to be interested in certain topics and certain voices. "You're looking for an editor more than a house," says Sagalyn, because only the editor who acquires a manuscript has an investment in it even approaching that of the author. (That's not always the case, however; Gerard McCauley, a Katonah, New York–based agent who has made a specialty of representing historians, suggested that documentary filmmaker Ken Burns turn down a higher advance for the book version of *The Civil War* in order to go with Knopf, which offered higher royalties. "We wanted Knopf's editorial side," he says. "They've done a lot of history, and we knew it'd be a good, handsome book.") During the mass exodus of editors from Pantheon last year, many authors—including Tom Lewis—followed, knowing full well that their books, without the acquiring editor to champion them, would probably be treated like orphans.

There's one final prerequisite for an academically oriented manuscript destined for trade publication, and it's an obvious one—good writing. Surprisingly, though, good writing is deemed by many agents to be less important than the other qualities, for prose can usually be improved. If the agent likes the central idea of a manuscript or book proposal—agents deal with both, but for nonfiction most prefer the latter—he or she may suggest the author translate the professional jargon into English, reorganize the book so it's more accessible in the very beginning, or replace abstractions with examples ("show, don't tell"). Many agents don't like to get involved in the hands-on shaping of a work, since it turns them into something more like editors. But others do, sensing not only the possibility of major dollars but also the opportunity to shepherd important ideas into the broader public discourse. When an agent has been particularly interventionist in helping an academic adapt his or her ideas for the trade marketplace, their collaboration is usually called "repackaging"—a term that isn't nearly as disparaging, by the way, as it sounds to some academics. In more extreme cases, often when an academic leads a research project in the social sciences, the agent may suggest working with a journalist, who can add both perspective and writing skill. That's the tack Carol Mann took with UC Berkeley School of Social Welfare senior lecturer Judith Wallerstein, who collaborated with *New York Times* science writer Sandra Blakeslee to write the best-selling *Second Chances: Men, Women, and Children a Decade After Divorce.*

HOW EDITORS RESPOND

The agent's appearance in the midst of the academic/editor relationship may seem, at first glance, a boon to everyone concerned. The agent weeds out inappropriate material before it clutters an editor's desk; the academic finds in the agent an initial, informal test market; and the agent makes a comfortable living. In fact, however, agents are a source of tension among academic-friendly editors, for they increase the costs of the very same books corporate publishers have begun to regard as marginal; the watchword for shareholder-owned commercial houses these days is "profitability," not "prestige." Academic editors are used to buying respectable, interesting, generally well-written manuscripts from professors at relatively low prices—professors have day jobs, and aren't supposed to be interested in money, anyway—and the arrival of the agents not only drove up prices but underlined the fact that the interests of the editor and the academic were not the same.

Trade-book editors, as a result, will talk only guardedly about their relationships with agents. Arthur J. Rosenthal, former director of Harvard University Press, now publisher of Hill & Wang, and a famous publishing curmudgeon, is typical when he says, "I'd be delighted not to comment." The use of an agent doesn't damage a manuscript's chances at a commercial house—if the agent is respected, indeed, it improves them—but agents do make editors' lives more difficult by insisting, sometimes shrilly, sometimes inaccurately, on a book's merit. Moreover, says Ed Barber, director of the trade division of W. W. Norton and the husband of agent

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The Linguist's Tale

Deborah Tannen, a professor of linguistics at Georgetown University, always knew she wanted to write for a broader audience. She had published with G. K. Hall, Ablex, Georgetown University Press, and later would publish with Cambridge, but continued to harbor "fantasies about my dissertation becoming a book in a bookstore." Tannen's fantasy, as anyone who's looked at a best-seller list knows, became reality—not for her dissertation but for a later project. *You Just Don't Understand: Men and Women in Conversation* (William Morrow, 1990) received some glowing reviews, was on the *New York Times* hardcover list for close to a year, and even became a best-seller in paperback at the same time.

Yet no one would have predicted a rosy future for Tannen in the commercial publishing world. In fact, after what she calls a four-year "nightmare" of getting her first book, *That's Not What I Meant: How Conversational Style Makes or Breaks Relationships,* into print, Tannen thought she'd never again write for the trade market.

Things started out well in 1981, when Tannen wrote *New York* magazine asking whether it would be interested in a more popular version of an article she had published in the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*. The magazine agreed enthusiastically, and the article, along with a subsequent one on a related topic for *Vogue,* caught the eye of New York book editors. Tannen then submitted several chapters of a proposed book to an agent, who agreed to represent her—if she reorganized into a book proposal the one hundred pages she had already written. That done, the agent sent out the proposal and three publishing houses came back with offers, of $7,500, $15,000, and $20,000. Tannen accepted the middle offer, from Dutton, because she liked the editor there. That editor suggested Tannen rework the material once more, which she did, but soon after turning in eighty new pages, using this editor's approach, she learned he had taken a new job with another house. Tannen's partial manuscript was passed on to another editor, who looked at everything Tannen had written to date and told her to start over from square one. She said Tannen could submit the first half of the new manuscript or the whole thing, and Tannen chose the latter route, only to have this editor tell her, when she turned in the 300 or so pages, that "the structure is all wrong. Throw it out and start over." The editor sent Tannen a half dozen self-help books to use as models, which the author found insulting, but she gritted her teeth and went back to work. Tannen sent in yet another outline, then three chapters, then three more—and got a letter back saying editor #2 had left the company.

PUBLISHING HER FIRST BOOK, SAYS TANNEN, WAS A FOUR-YEAR "NIGHTMARE."

Enter editor #3. She wanted Tannen to start from scratch once more, this time refocusing on communication between women and men. Tannen did another outline but then became involved in writing an academic paper and put the book aside for a few months—a wise move, as it turned out, for that editor, too, was soon gone, fired by management. Tannen eventually heard from editor #4, but by that time the battle at Dutton had been lost; the publishing house had already concluded that a writer who had gone through so many drafts, so many editors, couldn't be any good. Tannen asked her agent if there was any possibility of leaving Dutton, and fortunately, an editor at William Morrow, who had submitted the lowest bid on the original proposal, remained interested in the project. After seeing the six chapters written for editor #2, success: Editor #5—who remains Tannen's editor to this day—bought out the Dutton contract and upon reading Tannen's final manuscript pronounced it one of the easiest to edit she had ever encountered. Tannen's nightmare came, at last, to an end—but not before the book was ridiculed in the *Washington Times. That's Not What I Meant!* received, in toto, two reviews.

Needless to say, Tannen's views about the commercial publishing world are different today than when she was a trade-book tyro. But even though she no longer works with the agent who represented her during the *That's Not What I Meant!* debacle, she doesn't question the utility of agents. Indeed, she says she depends on her current agent, Suzanne Gluck of the mega-agency International Creative Management, "for everything," from pressuring the publisher about advertising to advice about which media outlets to talk to. She is, however, much more skeptical about what publishing houses say and do. "I started out assuming that editors know what a popular book should look like," she says. "Now I know that's totally ridiculous."

Perhaps most important, she has experienced first-hand the trade-offs required of the academic who is published by a commercial house. "A lot of my colleagues say, 'I want to write a popular book, too.' And I say, 'If you're in it for the money, forget it. It may not pay off. The only guarantee is that you'll pull your hair out. Don't do it unless you feel driven to do it.' " And even with her current fame and fortune, Tannen is very conscious of the downside—the incessant phone calls (she's had to hire an assistant), the distortion of her views by the media, reports of jealousy among colleagues, and the other trappings of celebrity, even on a relatively modest scale. Asked whether the experience has been worth the candle, Tannen replies, "I don't know yet. If things go on this way, maybe not. My life is not my own anymore." —*C.G.*

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Virginia Barber, "Agents often don't make distinctions among publishers. You get the message that the book would be fine here or fine there," an attitude that editors find both insulting and, often, untrue.

In the end, however, the tension between editors and agents can invariably be traced back to the question of money. "The problem for us," says Martin Kessler, publisher of HarperCollins's Basic Books division, "is the bidding that cannot be justified by the marketplace. Books that once would have gone for $10,000 may now go into the six figures, even the high six figures. And 'take the money and run' is a poor philosophy, especially for young academics." Many agents agree, knowing that they are investing their time in a scholar's career, not just a single book. "If you get $100,000 for a $25,000 book," says agent McCauley, "you're going to have problems. The author who signs just for the money is going to be in trouble, because it'll come home to roost." Overpayment often forces a house to redouble its marketing and promotion in an attempt to cover up its bad judgment and recoup the advance, but that approach is limited to obviously commercial titles. Academic works for which the publisher overpaid are more likely to be neglected than force-fed into the marketplace.

Are there good reasons, then, for an academic doing interesting, original work to pass up a chance at a literary agent?

AGENTS ARE A SOURCE OF TENSION AMONG ACADEMIC-FRIENDLY EDITORS.

The answer, of course, is "It depends." Neither Jonathan Spence nor Stephen Jay Gould, both published by Norton, has an agent, though each has been approached many times. Ed Barber says Gould "sees us as his agent," a statement that sounds paternalistic but is probably both true and reasonable—Norton, one of the few publishers not consumed by a conglomerate, vigilantly guards its reputation for being congenial to writers and academics. UCLA historian Robert Dallek, who publishes with Oxford, has considered getting an agent in the past but sees no need today. "An agent can save you all that wear and tear of hammering on doors," Dallek says, but adds that having one can evoke envy among one's peers. "They may think, 'He's becoming a businessman.' " And should an agent indeed help push the academic into best-sellerdom, he or she then has to deal with what agent Sagalyn calls "the Carl Sagan syndrome"—the fact that the academic is automatically looked down on as a "popularizer."

THE VIEW FROM THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Will a big-time trade house necessarily market your book more effectively than a university press would? Unless you have a best-seller on your hands, probably not. For in the past two decades or so many university presses have shown themselves to be capable of selling books as well as, and sometimes better than, the commercial houses. Some have become so adept in the marketplace, in fact, that literary agents no longer consider them solely university presses. Gerard McCauley places more than 90 percent of his clients with trade houses but says he considers Oxford "as much a trade publisher as a university press." Why? Because "they're very generous with their terms, and they do one of the best jobs [among university presses] of reaching the trade market. It's the editorial policy of the company; it's not an add-on."

Oxford is exceptional, of course, but along with Harvard, Yale, the University of California, and a number of other university presses it has been very successful in bringing the work of academic authors to a broader public. Oxford is spending at least $50,000 to ensure that Robert Dallek's new biography of Lyndon Johnson isn't overshadowed by the works of Robert A. Caro; Harvard bought time on CNN to take orders, via an 800 number, for Albert Hourani's *A History of the Arab Peoples*. It's a conscious choice. Kenneth Arnold, director of Rutgers University Press, says that with such presses increasingly unable to depend on subsidies, a consistent level of library purchases, and tangible and intangible university support, they've had to learn how to help themselves. "You just can't publish too many books that lose $6,000 to $10,000," he says. For a smaller university press, that can mean becoming a "niche" publisher, like Rutgers, or choosing an interdisciplinary approach, like Wesleyan, or playing with the big boys, like Oxford—or some combination of those approaches.

University presses, consequently, are having to deal with agents much more than they used to, and so far it's been a rocky relationship, a much-heightened version of the ordinary, day-to-day tension between agents and commercial editors. Not only do most university presses offer little in terms of advance money—a five-figure deal is unusual—but the particular advantages a university press can promise a potential author, such as more individualized attention, a sophisticated understanding of the author's ideas, a longer time in print, are often undervalued by agents. The university press, for example, may "shape a book in a more intellectual direction," which would likely lead to a better critical response, says Terry Cochran, director of Wesleyan University Press; and sometimes, says Arnold, "we teach authors how to write books." But in the agent's eyes such things likely count for very little, because 10 to 15 percent (the agent's

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If an academic does decide to go the agent route, everyone agrees that he or she should be prepared to look long and hard. It's shockingly easy to set up shop as an agent, and some who do have no idea what areas particular houses, let alone particular editors, are most interested in. Some authors prefer small operations, where clients receive a lot of personal attention and where their work may be most respected; others prefer larger agencies, which may be better known—yes, also in Hollywood—but where the environment is much more competitive. Jay Rosen, an assistant professor of journalism at New York University, is currently looking for an agent for a book on the idea of the American public and has come to believe that "established agents are better for you, in one sense, in that they can give you credibility—but that also means they have a lot of clients. So in that respect it may be better to get a younger agent, one who's hungrier."

"There is a burden on academics," says Rosen, "to understand the requirements of publishing. It's not just a question of money-hungry publishers"—and agents—"exploiting scholars." Asking friends and peers for recommendations is the most obvious way of learning about agents, but there are many other methods. "Read the acknowledgment pages of books you admire," HarperCollins's Van Dusen suggests; if the author has an agent, she'll thank her, and if she doesn't thank her, you probably wouldn't want that agent anyway. There are guidebooks to agents as well: A good one (available only by mail) is *Literary Agents of North America,* published in New York City by Author Aid Associates.

At some level, of course, the academic who tries to break into trade publishing is dancing with the Devil. There are inevitable trade-offs to be made. But literary agents are conscious of that fact, and good ones impress on academics that it's really up to them to decide what a book is about, what audience it's going to reach—that the most basic question is, What do you, as an academic, really want? "One of the first questions I ask," says Raphael Sagalyn, "is, 'What are your ambitions for the book?' " Often it turns out that the academic is full of desire and good intentions but unwilling to accept the compromises that would bring such hopes to fruition. And many times, of course, those "compromises" aren't compromises at all; they are refinements, distillations, intended to make an idea clearer, more direct, more compelling. It's easy to condescend to a publishing world that makes stars of writers like Kitty Kelley, but academics like Deborah Tannen and Albert Hourani are on the best-seller lists, too, and chances are their works will remain in print long after Kelley's are forgotten. LF

Chris Goodrich is a contributing editor of Publishers Weekly *and author of* Anarchy and Elegance: Confessions of a Journalist at Yale Law School, *which was published by Little, Brown in February. His agent is Raphael Sagalyn.*

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usual fee) of very little is absolutely minuscule.

The chief complaint of university presses about agents is that they are condescending. Agents, simply put, treat them as if they are minor league. The university presses are annoyed by the fact that agents usually turn to them only as a last resort and seem to assume that they all are pretty much alike; they're infuriated when agents snatch authors away from a university press that has published them well, and at considerable cost, for some time. Norton editor Gerald Howard was speaking of literary works in commercial publishing when he made the following observation in *The American Scholar* in 1989, but it applies just as well to academic writing in the university press world: "A superb publication of the author's previous work is often used *against* you: every editor has had the experience of an agent reminding him in a negotiation that 'there are a lot of people out there interested in____'s work' when it is the sweat equity and promotional money and publishing smarts you and your firm have applied to ____'s last book, as much as the literary quality of the work itself, that created the interest."

David Kirp, a professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley, has published with the University of California, University of Chicago, Rutgers, and other academic publishers and, though he wouldn't mind signing for big bucks with a trade house, has had very good experiences with university presses. That's partly due to his choice of presses: *Learning by Heart: AIDS and Schoolchildren in America's Communities* (1989) was published by Rutgers, which is very conscious of the need to make its list accessible, in both literary and bookselling terms. "Rutgers spent a lot of time and money on that book," Kirp says, sending him on a book tour and giving the title a relatively high profile. And for a university press book, *Learning by Heart* has done quite respectably, selling some 5,000 copies in the first year—a level it might have easily failed to reach at an uninspired trade house. Having done a quick cost-benefit analysis, such a publisher would probably have concluded that Rutgers's aggressive marketing was unlikely to pay off and certainly wouldn't have said, as Kenneth Arnold does, that it "really doesn't matter" whether the book makes money.

From the academic's point of view, the decision about whether to go with a university press or a commercial house is not so clear as it might initially seem. "Writers have to figure out what they want among money, prestige, notoriety," says Kirp, who is in the process of researching and writing two new books. One, a scholarly title on AIDS policy, he assumes will be published by Rutgers; another, called *House of Dreams* and dealing with a community's decades-long quest for affordable housing, he hopes will reach a wider audience—and, consequently, he has signed on with a literary agent. After a difficult relationship with his previous agent—Kirp dropped him after the agent failed to sell *Learning by Heart*—he's very pleased with Lizzie Grossman of Sterling Lord Literistic. "She's in the business because she's really interested in ideas," Kirp says. "I'd like Lizzie to be a character in my life for a good long time."

—*C.G.*

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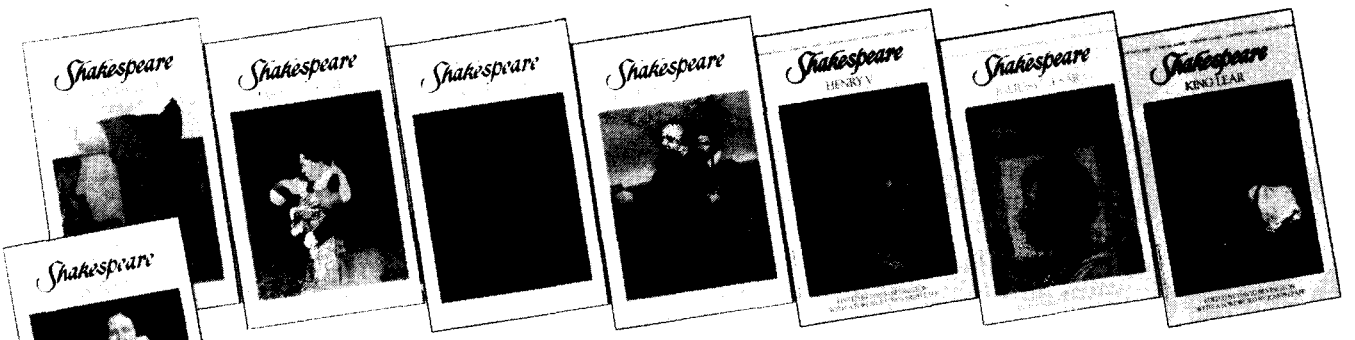

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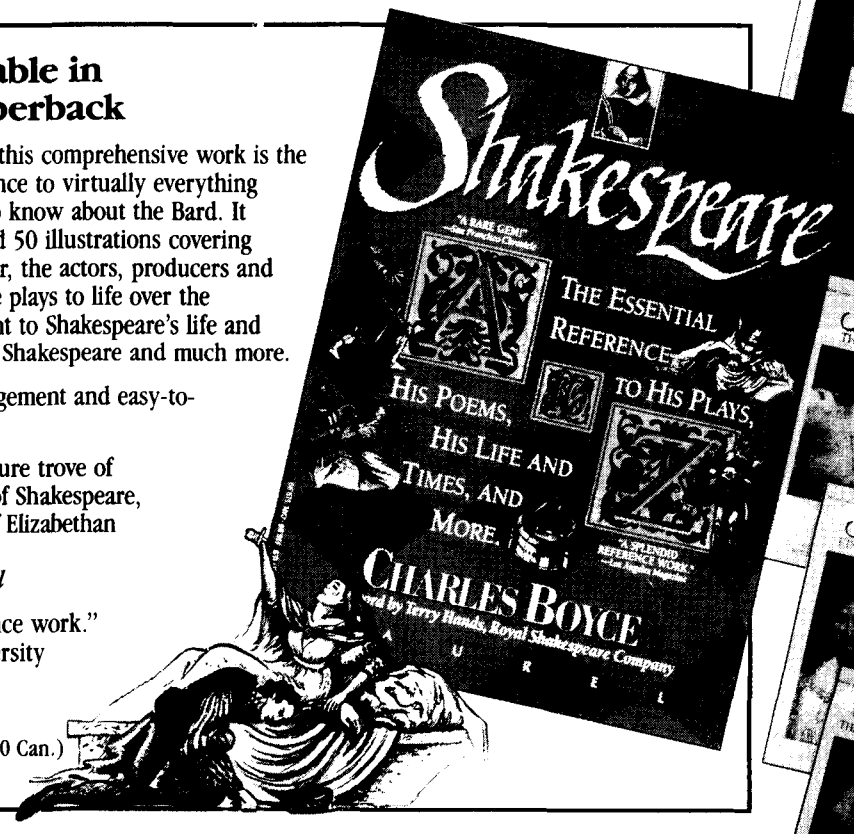

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ESSAY

TEACHING LIKE IT MATTERS

A modest proposal for revolutionizing the classroom

"Fear is what prevents the flowering of the mind."

—J. Krishnamurti, *On Education*

As professors of English, we are always one way or another talking about what we think is wrong with the world and to a lesser extent about what we'd like to see changed. Whether we seek gender equality, or economic justice, or simply believe in the power and beauty of great literature, we preach some gospel or other. We do this indirectly, but always. What I have to say is very simple and comes directly off this point: Our practice in the classroom doesn't often come very close to instantiating the values we preach.

I was led to think about the distance between what we do as teachers and what we believe in by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, whose great theme is that you cannot have a revolution unless education becomes a practice of freedom. That is, to the extent that the teaching situation reflects the power relations currently in force, which are assumed to be oppressive and authoritarian, to that extent will the students themselves, when they come to power, reproduce that situation in another form. He argues that if political revolution is to succeed, pedagogy must first enact that very unalienated condition which the revolution presumably exists to usher in. Now the situation that currently pertains in the classroom, according to Freire, can best be understood through the analogy of banking. "In the banking concept of education," he writes, "knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those who they consider to know nothing.... Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat."

I don't think that this is the model we have to contend with in the United States today, at least not in higher education, at least not for the most part. We have class discussion, we have oral reports, we have student participation of various kinds— students often choose their own paper topics, suggest additional readings, propose issues for discussion. As far as most of us are concerned, the banking model is obsolete. But what we do have is something no less coercive, no less destructive of creativity and self-motivated learning, and that is something I'll call the performance model.

I became aware of this phenomenon some four or five years ago when I was teaching a combined graduate-undergraduate course at Columbia University. Why the realization came to me then I cannot explain. I remember walking down the empty hall to class (always a little bit late) and thinking to myself, "I have to remember to find out what they want, what they need, and not worry about whether what I've prepared is good enough or ever gets said at all." Whereas, for my entire teaching life, I had always thought that what I was doing was helping my students to understand the material we were studying—Melville or deconstruction or whatever—I had finally realized that what I was actually concerned with and focused on most of the time were three things: a) to show the students how smart I was, b) to show them how knowledgeable I was, and c) to show them how well-prepared I was for class. I had been putting on a performance whose true goal was not to help the students learn but to perform before them in such away that they would have a good opinion of me. I think that this essentially, and more than anything else, is what we teach our students: how to perform within an institutional academic setting in such a way that they

BY JANE TOMPKINS

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will be thought highly of by their colleagues and instructors.

What is behind this model? How did it come to be that our main goal as academicians turned out to be performance? I think the answer to the question is fairly complicated, but here is one way to go. Each person comes into a professional situation dragging along behind her a long bag full of desires, fears, expectations, needs, resentments—the list goes on. But the main component is fear. Fear is the driving force behind the performance model. Fear of being shown up for what you are: a fraud, stupid, ignorant, a clod, a dolt, a sap, a weakling, someone who can't cut the mustard .... Thinking about these things, I became aware recently that my own fear of being shown up for what I really am must transmit itself to my students, and insofar as I was afraid to be exposed, they too would be afraid.

Such fear is no doubt fostered by the way our institution is organized, but it is rooted in childhood. Many, perhaps most, people who go into academic life are people who as children were good performers at home and in school. That meant that as children they/we successfully imitated the behavior of adults before we were in fact ready to do so. Having covered over our true childish selves, we have ever since been afraid of being revealed as the unruly beings we actually are .... We became so good at imitating the behavior of our elders, such expert practitioners at imitating whatever style, stance, or attitude seemed most likely to succeed in the adult world from which we so desperately sought approval that we came to be split into two parts: the real backstage self who didn't know anything and the performing self who got others to believe in its expertise and accomplishments. As teachers, still seeking approval from our peers and from our students, we exemplify a model of performance which our students succeed in emulating, thus passing the model down to future generations.

There is one other kind of fear that I want to mention here, institutional in its origin, and that is the fear of pedagogy itself as a focus of our attention. We have been indoctrinated from the very start, at least I was, to look down on pedagogy as a subject matter and to deride colleges of education. I was taught to see them as a sort of natural repository for the unsmart, the people who scored in the fiftieth percentile on their tests and who couldn't make it into the higher realms to which I had so fortunately been admitted.

I remember quite vividly my introduction to this point of view. It was in an anteroom at Swarthmore College while waiting to be interviewed by a committee representing the Woodrow Wilson Foundation. While I sat there in a state of abject terror, I overheard a conversation between two young men also hoping to convince the committee's graybeards to find them worthy of fellowships. One of them said to the other—I no longer remember his exact words—that thinking about teaching was the lowest of the low and that anyone who occupied himself with it was hopelessly beyond the pale and just didn't belong in higher education. I'll never forget my surprise and dismay at hearing this opinion, which had never occurred to me before, for I had previously thought (coming from a family of teachers) that teaching was an important part of what any college professor would do. As things turned out, I subsequently embraced the view I overheard and held it as my own for some thirty years; or rather, this view embraced me, for my antipedagogical indoctrination went on pretty steadily throughout graduate school. Now obviously, despite all this, I must have given some thought over the years to what went on in my classroom. One cannot be a total somnambulist and still survive, though I think a lot of people, myself included, have come pretty close. But I paid attention only when forced to because things weren't going well, and even then I felt I was doing something vaguely illegitimate. I used to wonder by what mysterious process others managed their classes, since no one ever talked, really talked, about what they did. Oh, there were

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plenty of success stories and the predictable remarks about a discussion that had been like pulling teeth but never anything about how it really felt to be up there day after day. In this respect teaching was exactly like sex for me—something you weren't supposed to talk about or focus on in any way but that you were supposed to be able to do properly when the time came....

But there is one thing people do sometimes talk about in relation to teaching, and they do this now more frequently than in the past. They talk about using teaching as a vehicle for social change. We tell ourselves that we need to teach our students to think critically so that they can detect the manipulations of advertising, analyze the fallacious rhetoric of politicians, expose the ideology of popular TV shows, resist the stereotypes of class, race, and gender; or, depending on where you're coming from, hold the line against secular humanism and stop canon-busting before it goes too far.

Under the guise of serving students, I was being self-centered, always worrying about what people thought of me.

But I have come to think more and more that what really matters as far as our own beliefs and projects for change are concerned is not so much what we talk about in class as what we do. I have come to think that teaching and learning are not a preparation for anything but are the thing itself.... The classroom is a microcosm of the world; it is the chance we have to practice whatever ideals we may cherish. The kind of classroom situation one creates is the acid test of what it is one really stands for. And I wonder, in the case of college professors, if performing their competence in front of other people is all that that amounts to in the end.

I've now made an awkward lunge in the direction of creating a different world in the classes I teach. It wasn't virtue or principle that led me to this but brute necessity caused by lack of planning. A year ago last fall, because I knew I wouldn't have time to prepare my classes in the usual way, I borrowed a new teaching method from a colleague and discovered, almost by accident, a way to make teaching more enjoyable and less anxiety-producing.

More enjoyment and less anxiety do not sound like very high-minded goals. In fact, they are self-centered. My upbringing taught me never to declare that anything I did was self-centered, especially not if it had to do with an activity like teaching, which is supposed to be altruistic. But I had discovered that under the guise of serving students, I was being self-centered anyway, always worrying about what people thought of me. So I tried something else for a change.

What the method boils down to is this: The students are responsible for presenting the material to the class for most of the semester. I make up the syllabus in advance, explain it in detail at the beginning of the course, and try to give most of my major ideas away. (This is hard; holding on to one's ideas in case one should need them to fill some gap later on is bred in the bone after twenty-odd years in the classroom.) The students sign up for topics that interest them, and they work with whoever else has signed up for their topic; anywhere from two to four people will be in charge on a given day. On the first round of reports, the groups meet with me outside of class to discuss their ideas and strategies of presentation. I give plenty of feedback in written form, but no grades.

I find that my classes are better. The students have more to say in every class, more students take part in the discussions, students talk more to each other and less to me, and the intensity and quality of their engagement with the course materials is higher than usual. Because I don't have the burden of responsibility for how things are going to go every time, I can contribute when I feel I really have something to say. I concentrate better on what is being said, who is talking, and on how the class is going—how things feel in the class.

Still, there is the question of whether, in shifting the burden of performance onto the students, I'm not making them do work I'm too lazy to do myself, sending them off on a journey with inadequate supplies, telling them to go fishing without a rod or bait, demanding they play the Kreuzer Sonata before they can do a scale. It's true that in some cases the students don't deal with the material as well as I could, but that is exactly why they need to do it. It's not important for me to polish my skills but they do need to develop theirs and to find a voice.

When the same person is doing the presenting all the time, inevitably one line of approach to the materials is going to dominate. But when it's not the teacher who is always calling the shots, the interests of the individual students have a chance to emerge. You find out what they want to focus on, think is important, believe in. Several points of view get to be enunciated from the position of designated speaker: students get practice in presenting material in a way that is interesting.... to other people; the variety keeps the class entertained and passes responsibility around so that even the quietest students have to contribute and end up feeling better about themselves.

Almost every class I've ever conducted in this way has had its own intellectual center of gravity. A cluster of issues or sometimes a single problem keeps on coming up; the students develop a vocabulary and a common set of references for discussing it. This gives the class a sense of identity, a coherence as much social as intellectual....

Last spring I taught a course in a subject I had been wanting to explore but knew little about: The subject was emotion. The course was offered under the rubric Feminist Theory in the Humanities, one of three core courses in a women's studies graduate certificate program newly launched at my university. I'd gotten the idea for it from a brilliant lecture Alison Jaggar had given entitled "Love and Knowledge." Jaggar argued that since reason, in Western epistemology, had traditionally been stipulated as the faculty by which we know what we know, and since women, in Western culture, are required to be the bearers of emotion, women were automatically

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delegitimized as sources of knowledge, their epistemic authority cut off from the start.

Using this idea as my inspiration, I decided we would look at the way emotion had been dealt with in the West—in philosophy, psychology, anthropology, literature and literary criticism, and religious studies (this was an interdisciplinary course both in subject matter and in enrollment). We ended by looking at examples of feminist writing that integrated emotion and ideation both in substance and in form.

This was the most amazing course I've ever taught, or rather the most amazing class I've never taught, because each class was taught by the students. Since I had no expertise in any of the areas we were dealing with except the literary, there was no way I could be responsible for presenting the material every time. So, having put together a syllabus by hook or by crook, I distributed responsibility for class presentations in the way I've just outlined. I encouraged the students to be creative in their modes of presentation and, since this was a course in emotion, encouraged people to be free in expressing their feelings and to talk about their own experiences whenever they seemed relevant. One of the points of the course was, in practice, to break down the barrier between public discourse and private feeling, between knowledge and experience.

You see, I wanted to be iconoclastic. I wanted to change the way it was legitimate to behave inside academic institutions. I wanted to make it okay to get shrill now and then, to wave your hands around, to cry in class, to do things in relation to the subject at hand other than just talking in an expository or adversarial way about it. I wanted never to lose sight of the fleshly, desiring selves who were engaged in discussing hegemony or ideology or whatever it happened to be; I wanted to get the ideas that were "out there," the knowledge that was piled up impersonally on shelves, into relation with the people who were producing and consuming it. I wanted to get "out there" and "in here" together. To forge a connection between whatever we were talking about in class and what went on in the lives of the individual members. This was a graduate course, and the main point, for me, was for the students, as a result of the course, to feel some deeper connection between what they were working on professionally and who they were, the real concerns of their lives. This may sound utopian. Or it may sound childlike. But I did and do believe that unless there is some such connection, the work is an empty labor which will end by killing the organism that engages it.

The course was in some respects a nightmare. There were days when people went at each other so destructively that students cried after class or got migraine headaches (I started getting migraines after every class before long). There were huge misunderstandings, factions, discussions at cross purposes, floundering, a sense of incoherence—everything that one might have feared. There were days when I decided I had literally opened a Pandora's box and that we would all have been better off conducting business as usual....

But this was also the most exciting class I've ever been in. I never knew what was going to happen. Apart from a series of stunning self-revelations, wonderful readings added to the reading list by the students, and reports whose trajectory came as a total surprise, we were led, as a class, by various reporting groups into role-playing, picture drawing, and even on one occasion into participating in a religious ceremony.

I learned from this class that every student in every class one "teaches" is a live volcano, or, as James Taylor puts it in his song, "a churnin' urn o' burnin' funk." There is no one thing that follows from this discovery, but for me it has meant that I can never teach in the old way again. By which I mean that I can never fool myself into believing that what I have to say is ultimately more important to the students than what they think and feel. I know now that each student is a walking field of energy teeming with agendas. Knowing this, I can conduct my classes so as to tap into that energy field and elicit some of the agendas....

Teaching is a service occupation, but it can only work if you discover, at a certain point, how to make teaching serve you. Staying alive in the classroom and avoiding burnout means finding out what you need from teaching at any particular time. I went from teaching as performance to teaching as a maternal or coaching activity because I wanted to remove myself from center stage and get out of the students' way, to pay more attention to them and less to myself. On an ideological plane, then, you might say I made the move in order to democratize the classroom. But on a practical plane, I did it because I was tired....

I'm not suggesting that other teachers should adopt this particular method. There are a million ways to teach. (Nor do I think this method is suitable only for graduate students or students in elite institutions; Freire worked with illiterate peasants.) What I'm suggesting are two things. First, what we do in the classroom is our politics. No matter what we may say about Third World this or feminism that, our actions and our interactions with students week in, week out prove what we are for and what we are against in the long run.... Second, the politics of the classroom begins with the teacher's treatment of and regard for him or her self. A kinder, more sensitive attitude toward one's own needs as a human being, in place of a desperate striving to meet professional and institutional standards of arguable merit, can bring greater sensitivity to the needs of students and a more sympathetic understanding of their positions both as workers in the academy and as people in the wider world. LF

This was the most amazing course I've ever taught— or rather never taught—because each class was taught by the students.

Jane Tompkins is a professor of English at Duke University and the author of Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790–1860 *and the forthcoming* West of Everything. *This article–Copyright 1990 by the National Council of Teachers of English. Reprinted with permission.*

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INTERVIEW

A HUNKA' HUNKA' BURNIN' TEXT

GREIL MARCUS ON DEAD ELVIS AND OTHER POP ICONS

FOR TWO DECADES, GREIL MARCUS HAS BEEN WRITING stylishly, ambitiously, and idiosyncratically about rock and roll. He is the author of *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music* (Dutton, 1975), which *Rolling Stone* magazine called "probably the best book ever written about rock," and of *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Harvard University Press, 1989), in which Marcus proposes a genealogy of anarchistic naysaying from the Dadaists to the Situationist International to the Sex Pistols. His forthcoming book *Dead Elvis* (Doubleday, November 1991) is a passionate chronicle of the American obsession with Elvis Presley—dead, alive, resurrected, and partially decomposed—and a pastiche of truly weird Elvis imagery. (Among our favorites is the tabloid story about the eight-foot Elvis statue found on Mars.)

Though Marcus, now 46, did graduate work in political theory at Berkeley, he is not an academic but a free-lance intellectual who has written cultural criticism for *Rolling Stone, The Village Voice, Raw, Texte zur Kunste, New Formations,* and *Artforum.*

Last spring, we talked with him in his Berkeley, California, home about Elvis and the cultural imagination, pop cultural studies in the academy, and the future of rock criticism. What follows are excerpts from that conversation.

LF: *Why is Elvis the one dead pop singer whom people won't leave dead?*

On the one hand, it's totally commercial: The supermarket tabloids have a wonderful time with this, people publish books about it or release little cassettes of singers they claim are Elvis. But I don't know that there's a lot to be found by trying to discover what people want when they believe that Elvis is alive, other than for many people it was painful when he died, and they don't want to accept that. At a little bit deeper level—but I don't know if this has anything to do with the Elvis-is-alive craze—is the widespread and not very well understood sense that Elvis's death was a betrayal. He was not supposed to die. He was always supposed to be there. He was going to be an accompanying spirit to the generation he helped form, to the white working-class South which saw itself in him, to people all over the world for whom Elvis was the ultimate symbol and mystery of America.

LF: *In the book you say that you think about Elvis in terms of Melville and Faulkner and Lincoln, "figures who represent a fantasy of what the deepest and most extreme possibilities and dangers of our national identity are." What do you mean by that?*

Well, I think ultimately, and just speaking for myself, it's not so much Elvis as some sort of sociological construct or magnet for all different kinds of conflicting American impulses. As time has gone on, I hear what I was talking about there—this whole sense of going to the extremes of American identity. I hear it in the music; I hear it in the timbre of his voice; I hear it in certain gestures that I see that he made on television in 1956 or 1957—that I don't hear to the same degree or with the same sort of emotional complexity in anyone else's music. I don't hear the summation that I hear in a record like "Mystery Train," where all kinds of symbols are being smashed together and someone is actually in confrontation with them, is transforming them, as a singer. It's a symbol of a train, it's a devil's train, it's out of control, it's powerful, it's destructive, it's going to take everything you love away—and the singer is confronting that and trying to somehow beat that train. And that goes right back to Washington Irving, Edgar Allan Poe—that's the way that song works. And he wins. And he convinces you that he's won. Now, you can throw that back at me, and say, "Ah, but he wasn't thinking of any of that stuff." Well, of course he wasn't. But to say that he wasn't doing it is something else.

LF: *But in the book you credit Elvis with having*

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been more conscious of his particular aesthetic powers than is usually acknowledged, of having had, in your words, "intention beyond undifferentiated desire."

Well, yes. Elvis has always been dismissed as a conscious artist in part because he was a poor boy from the South, from uneducated people—white trash. But I think he was conscious and deliberate—and most of all when it came to shocking the country. I don't think you can watch his many TV appearances in 1956 and not see that; it's just patent; it's there. I mean he did things that no white person had ever done before in public, and he also did things that were pretty far beyond what black performers did except in private clubs, in terms of the way he moved.

Lf: *So there was a reason he had to be filmed from the waist up on* The Ed Sullivan Show.

That was only once. He—his whole body—was on the Sullivan show twice; it was only the last time that they cut him off. And if you watch that show, it's just amazing. He knows very well they are going to censor it, and so he moves more than he ever did before, he gets louder screams than he ever did before, and he performs almost the whole time looking down as if he's watching his lower body; he's the viewer of his own pornography.

Lf: *What do you think about Elvis's relationship to black musicians and black music?*

That's a hard question for me to answer. There's a lot of quotation in the book, a lot of bringing together of other voices, and I pretty much let other people talk about that. One source I quote is Linda Ray Pratt, a professor of English at the University of Nebraska who talks about how, to her, as a white girl growing up in Mississippi in the fifties, Elvis didn't seem all white—and how exciting and worrisome and repulsive that was. And who knows?

I do think Elvis had a greater ability to hear, to respond to, and to remake black music than almost any white person of our time, and more than many black people. The proof is in the fact that as a teenager he went down to Beale Street and performed in black clubs, before he had made any records, when he was totally unknown. People loved him—and not just as a curio.

Lf: *He may have had black audiences in his very early career, but as time went on, his following was virtually all white.*

I think his audience very quickly became overwhelmingly white. His first records—"Heartbreak Hotel" and others—were hits on black radio stations, no question about that. And there were always some black people who liked him. (There were always plenty of black people who liked Perry Como, for that matter, and certainly many who loved Frank Sinatra. One of the biggest Elvis fans I've ever heard of is Thomas Hearns, the boxer. He gave a wonderful interview in which he talked about how before his fights he likes to listen to Elvis's records, particularly the movie sound tracks. And when the interviewer asked him what he thought about as he listened, he said, "Well, sometimes I think that I could be Elvis.") But I don't think I saw anybody black at Elvis's concerts. He was so white in the way he lived and in the values he ended up not standing for but living out. He was trying so hard to be a good old boy surrounded by all of his buddies—the boys-club-forever routine that kind of governed his private life, particularly in Memphis, a very segregated town. But ultimately, I think that's a question I don't really handle in the book. Maybe I can't. Somebody else will have to take those issues on.

Elvis had a greater ability to hear, to respond to, and to remake black music than almost any white person of our time.

Lf: *Do you think of yourself as a kind of public intellectual—a member of the endangered species that Russell Jacoby writes about in* The Last Intellectuals?

I think I probably had the same reaction to Russell Jacoby's book as about 90 percent of the people who read it, which was: Well, what about me? It's hard for me to imagine that anyone read that book except people who hoped they would find themselves celebrated in it. I actually read it because I had heard he did a great job trashing Fredric Jameson and some other people and I'm always into reading that. But I thought he did a really terrible job trashing them; he didn't come near them. And they weren't even good straw men; Fredric Jameson is not, by Russell Jacoby's definition, a public intellectual. He's just a well-known academic. (Stanley Aronowitz comes a lot closer, but he hasn't found a voice that people look to.) But the thing about Jacoby's book is that you can

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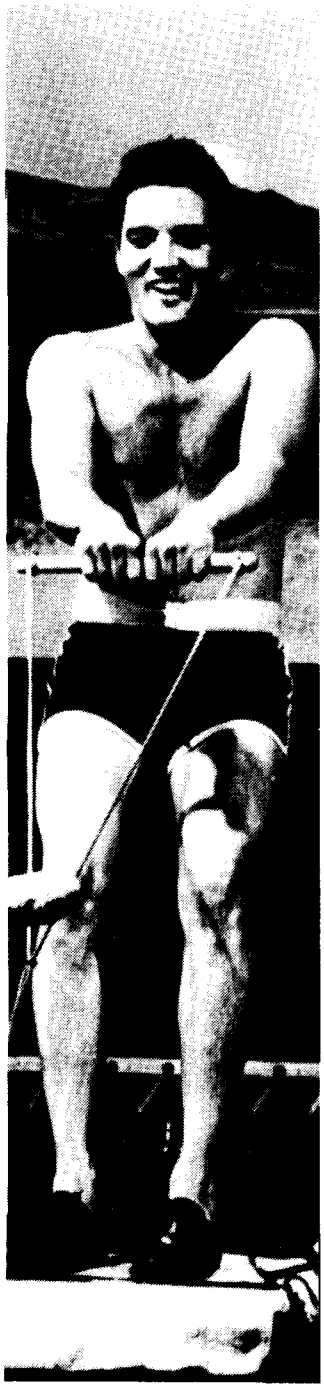
Yet he was so white in the values he ended up living out.



read it and say: Yep, he's right, there is no Edmund Wilson anymore. Then you read his thesis that the creation of public intellectuals had to do with certain socioeconomic conditions of the thirties and forties and the Bohemian enclaves of that period and basically he's saying the world isn't like it used to be. To which you can only reply, again: That's right. In other words, the book is essentially a slipknot.

There will be public intellectuals when people in the academy get frustrated with only hearing their own voices coming back to them from different mouths, when the comforts of playing to a known audience begin to grate, or when they write books that can begin to develop a readership. For example, I think Tim Clark's [1984] book *The Painting of Modern Life* is just the epitome of the kind of book that makes intricate and major arguments about the nature of social life, art, culture, and politics and that is utterly comprehensible to anyone who wants to read something a little bit more slowly than they would a comic book. And yet the reviewing media at that point were not set up to talk about the book as something accessible, challenging, striking. Instead it was pigeonholed as a piece of art history, which is the least of what it is. Still, I think the time will come when books like that will circulate and be read in the way that they are in France—not that I would trade our culture for French culture.

Lf: *In criticism of popular culture these days, there seems to be an ever-widening gap between mainstream TV critics and the like who are real-*

All-American Elvis

The following passage is from Greil Marcus's forthcoming book, Dead Elvis, ***excerpted by permission of the author. Marcus gave the talk from which it is taken in Memphis, Tennessee in 1981:***

America is a young country, as countries go. Because of that, and because it's a polyglot country, filled with people of all sorts, made out of a clash of languages and regions and religions, and because it's based in crime, in slavery and the extermination of the Indians, and because it's based in a war, the Civil War, a war that has yet to be fully settled, we're uncertain about what it is to be American—uncertain and eager for a nice, neat definition. There have been a lot of them, some enforced by law and some set forth in poetry. This is our great subject, but of late it's been narrowed down, as if we've given up on the question, on our story. Now we ask, What does it mean to be a black American? A white Southern American? An Italian-American? A Jewish-American? We're relatively comfortable with these questions. But if we chance to encounter a figure like Herman Melville, or Abraham Lincoln, Emily Dickinson, William Faulkner, Howlin' Wolf, or Elvis Presley, they blow those neat questions apart. For some years now, I've thought of Elvis in terms of blues singers like Robert Johnson and punk bands like the Sex Pistols or X—the Los Angeles group that's just put out a tune called "Back 2 the Base," the best song about Elvis since Bill Parsons's "The All-American Boy"—and I've thought of Elvis in terms of Melville and Lincoln and Faulkner. Some people have been interested in the notion of looking at Elvis this way, and some people have been irritated, but what has actually upset people is the argument that Elvis belongs in this company because he was, in a way that we don't quite understand, conscious. He knew what he was doing. If he redefined what it means to be American, it was because he meant to. He wanted change. He wanted to confuse, to disrupt, to tear it up. He was not, in any important manner, a folk artist, as RCA once called him and as timid folk have called him ever since—he was not an exemplar of "the people." Watch him as he first appeared on television in 1956, watch the way he moves, what he says, how he says it: the willfulness, the purpose is unmistakable. And yet so many of us missed it: As we watched, we drew a veil over the man bent on saying what he meant.

It wasn't only the idea of the conscious actor that led me to place Elvis and Lincoln and Melville together, though—it was as much the sense of mystery in the speeches, the novels, the music. No one knows how to explain the grace in Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address. No one knows how to explain the unholy power of the chapter in *Moby-Dick* called "The Whiteness of the Whale," the chapter that makes you wish that you too were on the ship on the hunt. And no one knows how to explain [the way Elvis sang "Tryin' to Get to You" on his 1968 comeback TV show]. "I don't get it," a musician friend said of Elvis's guitar playing, as we watched that

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ly just saying "Buy this or don't buy that; watch this or don't watch that," and the highly sophisticated, theoretically informed but often thoroughly inaccessible work being done in the academy. Is this something you worry about? What do you think of the state of pop cultural studies?

First of all, in the past academics didn't write about popular culture at all, so this is a new phenomenon, and we really haven't seen it shake out yet. It really is in its birth pangs and has given rise to infinite absurdities. Second, there are never going to be a lot of people with something to say and the ability to say it in an interesting way—that's just not going to happen. You're never going to see an army of first class critics marching out of the academy to reshape the way we see culture and society; you may see four, five, or even a dozen sneaking out.

[As for theory,] well, with any kind of criticism, you find your way in the dark. Now, there are all kinds of intellectual constructs that will flicker as you go and cast certain spaces with shadows, helping you proceed and making things look different than they would have with just the naked eye.

Susan McClary's wonderful new book on gender and music, *Feminine Endings,* is a perfect example. It's a book that could never have been written without feminist theory—it's steeped in it—and yet what feminist theory primarily does is to let her start thinking and writing and then let her find her own way into the stuff that she loves or hates or cares about.

The best critics are going to be those who

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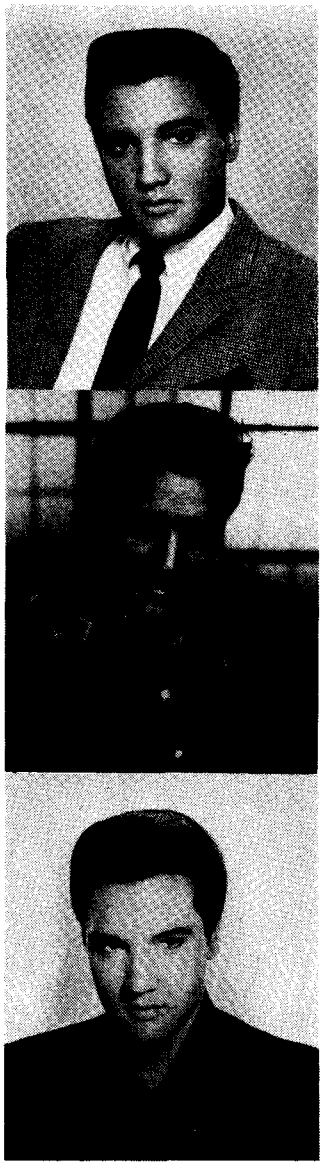
A lot of the people in cultural studies these days remind me of the FBI in the fifties: They find subversion everywhere.

video a few weeks ago. "Those are such easy chords." With each of these examples there is a presentation, an acting out, a fantasy, a performance, not of what it means to be American—to be a creature of history, the inheritor of certain crimes, wars, ideas, landscapes—but rather a presentation, an acting out, a fantasy of what the deepest and most extreme possibilities and dangers of our national identity are. We read, or we listen, or with Lincoln we read and imagine ourselves listening, then and there, on the spot, and we gasp. We get it. We feel ennobled and a little scared, or very scared, because we are being shown what we could be, because we realize what we are, and what we are not. We pull back.

We can't explain, but we can explain away. Melville was not much talked about until the 1920s, but after that he slowly became an academic industry, and his best books have stood up against the shallowest and the most pretentious analysis. The TV Guide listing for the film of *Moby-Dick* provides all the summation that's really necessary: "An American epic in which the mad captain of a whaling ship chases a white whale." That's enough for us to respond to. Lincoln has been an enigma, a saint, and a reproach ever since he was made a martyr. Faulkner took the curse of the Civil War upon himself and watched as his characters struggled to escape it, which he never permitted them to do. And yet each of them has been whittled down; a great attempt has been made to make these people, and their legacies, manageable. Melville? Central figure of the nineteenth-century American literary Renaissance. Lincoln? Keeper of our national soul. Faulkner? Mississippi's truest voice.

The same thing is going to happen to Elvis. It's already happening; the process is well advanced. There is less mystery every day. To many people, Elvis was no sort of creator, just an uneducated country boy with a smart manager and a gullible, thrill-seeking public to exploit. There's no aura of genius, of mystery, surrounding him; the very idea is ludicrous. To many who revere Elvis, the absence of genius is just as vital: their Elvis is a kind of innocent, passive, a hero because of where he came from and where he went. His death adds a layer of guilt to the story—Elvis's guilt, and the guilt of those who loved him but could not save him—and so this image is very powerful, a closed, imploding circle. To other Americans, Elvis is just a name, a joke, a few scandals. Or he is a symbol of rebellion. Or he existed only in 1954 and 1955, when he recorded for Sun records here in Memphis, before he was swallowed up and spat out by big business and mass culture. To say that this last idea of Elvis ignores most of his music, its complexity and its contradictions, the seeming gap I began with, is no strong criticism: All of these ideas of Elvis ignore most of his music, as each denies every other. In every case, a piece of Elvis for Everyone, and no effort to discover why an Everyone even comes into play, no attempt to seek out the whole story, to take it on its own terms, to say what those terms might be.



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bright lights, BIG DEALS

Is the UCLA film school selling out?

BY DANIEL SLOCUM HINERFELD

It was an unusual gathering in academe: The participants included reporters from National Public Radio, Cable News Network, and *Daily Variety;* the gourmet Mexican food was catered and served alfresco near an idyllic garden in the hills below Bel Air; the questions were genteel except for one from the UCLA campus paper, easily dodged. Though Gilbert Cates had been installed as dean of the UCLA School of Theater, Film, and Television two weeks earlier, the luncheon at the university's lush North Campus made it official. It was his formal introduction to that highest echelon of Los Angeles media, the entertainment press.

Cates is a prominent producer-director (he produced the last two Academy Awards shows) and a former two-term president of the Directors Guild of America. His appointment last April symbolizes a bitterly contested change in the school, specifically in the film and television department (hereafter, "film school"), which began in the mid-1980s when UCLA chancellor Charles E. Young announced his bold intention to make the university the country's preeminent center for graduate arts training. Last year, as part of the plan, Young divided the College of Fine Arts into the School of the Arts and the School of Theater, Film, and Television, spinning off several programs into the College of Letters and Science.

Critics of the film school, including present and past instructors, say it is abandoning the student-based auteur style of production that made it world famous—and which produced such maverick artists as Francis Ford Coppola, Carroll Ballard (*The Black Stallion*), Charles Burnett (*To Sleep With Anger*), and Joan Churchill (*Soldier Girl*)—in favor of large-scale, university-controlled, Hollywood-oriented moviemaking. This switch, they say, combined with a faculty purge, the influx of part-time instructors, and a plan to eliminate the undergraduate production program and to cut graduate enrollment by more than 30 percent, is a blunder with implications reaching far beyond UCLA or the world of film education.

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"The school has been a world-class influence on film culture and on culture in general," says Louis C. Stoumen, a prodigious filmmaker who has garnered five Academy Award nominations and two Oscars (for the documentaries *The True Story of the Civil War* in 1956 and *The Black Fox* in 1962) and has taught at the film school for twenty-three years. "I think we are losing that fast. I think it's really already gone. It's become a faculty-dominated film school with not much respect for film itself."

Stoumen, along with others, puts the blame largely on Chancellor Young, "a big handsome guy of no particular academic distinction who has consistently misunderstood the nature of the arts," and on a cadre of film scholars, transfixed by Hollywood, that views the production program with anxiety, jealousy, and mystification. Politically savvy members of this group are said to have used the chancellor's muddled displeasure with the film school as an opportunity to polarize the faculty and seize power. Their aim, say detractors, is to mimic UCLA's crosstown rivals, USC and AFI (American Film Institute), which enjoy a chummier, more lucrative relationship with the entertainment industry and tend to produce glitzier movies with mass-market appeal.

UCLA's is not the only film school moving into a more market-oriented, industry identified mode. Two of the "Big Five" film schools—Columbia and New York University—are reportedly reexamining their approaches to film education with an eye to giving students better employment prospects: at the least, an entry-level job in Hollywood upon graduation, at the most, immediate assimilation into the realm of deal-making by car phone. But if UCLA's transformation isn't the only one of its kind, it is certainly the most contested.

"The whole emphasis is on technique now," says John Boehm, a tenured lecturer who is a bitter critic of the change. "I think they want to burn the place down and out of the ashes build their own AFI."

Members of the new power structure argue that the film school was losing touch with the industry for which it ostensibly trained students. They portray the dissenters as cranky, unproductive codgers, blind to the need for change. Those opposing UCLA's new wave, however, are an accomplished and varied lot, united more by philosophy than by age, temperament, or pride. Says one, fired last year: "The UCLA film school is an institution in search of its soul. I pray they find it."

UCLA was a pioneer in film education. The film program started in 1947, and though located smack in the center of the movie industry, it concentrated on nonfiction and experimental film, cultivated the Bohemian sensibilities of its young auteurs, and tolerated a fair amount of scruffiness around the edges. "When I first came to the school in 1965 we didn't have our own building," says one emeritus professor. "We were meeting in World War II barracks. But the spirit of the place was wonderful."

Under Colin Young, who presided over the film school from 1965 to 1970 and would later head the British National Film and Television School at Beaconsfield, UCLA flourished. "The natural explosion of filmmaking that happened in the 1960s was just unstoppable," says Don Mac Donald, a 1968 graduate and award-winning independent filmmaker who taught at the school. "The films of Truffaut and Godard had just come out, and there was new, less expensive, sixteen-millimeter technology. Everyone got the message at the same time: Real people can express themselves through film."

The school put film production ahead of film history and analysis, content ahead of form or technique, and most important, granted a great deal of autonomy to the student filmmaker. Students financed their films and therefore owned the copyrights. "A lot of things flowed from that," Mac Donald says, including raw, original work that sometimes brought the university under attack. "They believed that the right to express yourself, to interpret the world around you through media, is God-given, just like the right to do a watercolor painting or to write a poem. They weren't embarrassed by the word 'auteur,' which now is bad news in film education."

But by the early 1970s, radical changes in the entertainment industry had begun to reverberate in the film schools. Independent movie production burgeoned as the old studio system, previously the de facto academy for mainstream fiction filmmakers, disintegrated. Film schools, including UCLA, started to fill the void, orienting themselves more and more toward feature films and, inevitably, toward Hollywood. Still, UCLA remained something of an outsider into the 1980s.

"What was so cool about UCLA," says Nina Menkes, a 1989 UCLA graduate whose thesis film, ***Magdalena Viraga,*** won top national awards and was hailed as a milestone in feminist filmmaking, "is that it was aware of Hollywood and, to a certain extent, influenced by Hollywood, but it had its really strong independent spirit. It lived right there in the jaws of the lion."

In the mid-1980s, according to critics, the jaws started to close.

"About five years ago," Boehm says, "the pressure really started coming from the chancellor's office. They started to say the program was failing. Actually, it was working very well. I tried to get Young and vice chancellor Andrea Rich to look at some of the films my students had made. They wouldn't look at films; not interested. But they insisted the program was no good. It was actually failing only in the sense that the administration wasn't

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controlling it."

Up till that time, the production curriculum began with a short Super 8 film called *Project 1*. Students, most of whom had never held a camera before, were given a minimum of instruction and then, during one quarter, made a fifteen-minute film without synchronized sound that cost between $500

The aim, say critics, is to mimic UCLA's crosstown rivals, USC and AFI, which enjoy a chummier, more lucrative relationship with the film industry.

and $1,000. This was followed by a year and a half of courses in lighting, camera, directing, and editing. Those who made it through finally began a 16mm sync-sound film. Boehm and others insist that the system worked beautifully. The emphasis was on original ideas rather than slick technique; students were motivated by the thrill of creating a whole film by themselves in ten weeks; and, not least, it was cheap.

"Well, little by little," Boehm says, "we started getting people who didn't care about film itself. People in writing wanted to break off and become powerful. People in critical studies didn't like the fact that they were losing control of their students—because many liked production and realized that their critical studies faculty were talking Crit Latin."

With both pressure from the chancellor's office and internal dissension increasing, the film school finally opted to scrap the old production curriculum. Students were grouped into rotating crews and, after weeks of instruction in the basics of filmmaking, shot their first work in 16mm sync-sound. The period of instruction and preparation was lengthened a second time, and as the curriculum now stands, the first film project takes more than a year and costs approximately $10,000. Some recent first films have cost upward of $30,000. "It changed the whole tenor," Boehm says. "The kind of student who would accept that kind of discipline and input is not the same kind of renegade who really should be in film." Jorge Preloran, a renowned documentarian on the UCLA faculty, disagrees. "There was a lot of stress in the old system," he says, "and a lot of poets left because they didn't master the craft in that first film. The attrition rate was quite amazing, and what was left were people who had a lot of gumption—not necessarily the most talented ones."

Students agree the old system forced independence early. As a result, "we had the best films and the worst films," says Bob Manganelli, an MFA candidate. "There was really not much gray area in between. I think they're now trying to ensure that every student who comes in here at least reaches a level of competency before they leave."

Preloran and others contend that the technical quality of the first films is now much higher and that students learn from the beginning to be part of a team, vital in this most collaborative of arts. The new, more practical emphasis doesn't mean UCLA is becoming a trade school, they say, and there is no reason to be ashamed that graduates will be better prepared to find jobs.

"There was no advantage to putting students into a cocoon where the realities of film as a collaborative medium were never taught and were in fact scoffed at," says Howard Suber, a principal player in the film school's transformation. "Every film school just churns people out and they're driving taxis. They're frustrated people."

Still, the new pragmatism has many of the old curriculum's partisans up in arms. Emphasizing technical quality before students learn to develop and communicate an idea, they say, is like teaching syntax to children before they learn to speak. "The strength of the old program," says one student, "was that once the Super 8 students reached the advanced level, their films tended to be less stiff, less production oriented. They had a sense of freedom that the other films didn't have." Nina Menkes, who now teaches on the USC faculty while writing, directing, producing, and editing her own feature films, says "this whole focus on [the] team is exactly what they do at USC. They have writers and directors and cinematographers and they work in a group. Well, groups do not make great art. And I'll tell you something. USC is concerned because they haven't had a single interesting filmmaker come out of that school for years and years, and they're now trying to be more like UCLA. Hiring me was a step in that direction. And UCLA, which has produced one after another interesting, fantastic filmmaker, is trying to change their curiculum [to become more like USC's]."

Not all of the changes at UCLA are matters of explicit policy. According to both faculty and students, some members of the faculty production committee now control films by regulating access to facilities and equipment, at times cutting it off altogether. "The production committee has taken it on to be in charge of how equipment is used and who uses it," says Paula Achter, an MFA candidate and student activist. "Without unlimited access, the worst thing that can happen in a creative department happens: To get equipment you have to stroke egos. We don't want students to have to politicize their whole time in school. That will happen enough in the outside world."

Students and faculty also mention several recent episodes of censorship, the most egregious of which involved a 1989 film called *Animal Attraction*, a raunchy black comedy that portrays bestiality in an attempt to confront taboo aspects of race, class, and gender relations. "*Animal Attraction* dares you to think about stereotypes, particularly about how affluent Californians think about Mexicans," one instructor says. "It uses that as a dangerous subject of humor, and it leaves you with a very disturbing feeling." But the film deeply offended some members of UCLA's Latino and feminist communities, representatives of which organized a demonstration to interrupt its screening in the late spring of 1989.

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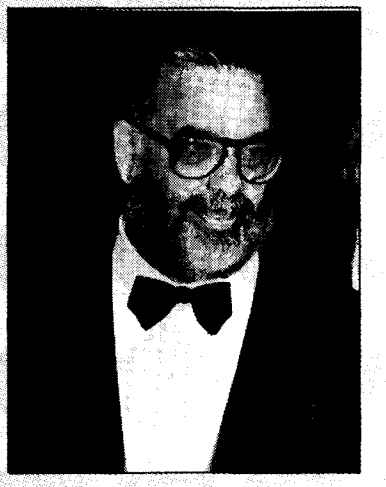
When the lights came up, protesters surrounded the director, George Cunningham, and a brawl erupted. "We really had an out-of-control situation," says one witness, "and finally the cops had to come."

Some of California's leading politicians and writers, including State Representative Art Torres and *Los Angeles Times* editorialist Frank del Olmo, soon joined the crusade. Though many had never actually seen the film, they publicly lambasted its young filmmaker, his advisers, and the school, and pressured Chancellor Young to investigate. "Young didn't know how to look at the film," recalls Boehm, one of the project's advisers. "He said it was an out-

THE A LIST

A glance at the alumni rolls of the Tinseltown film schools may be as revealing a way as any to assess the character of each program. Here are some of their more illustrious grads:

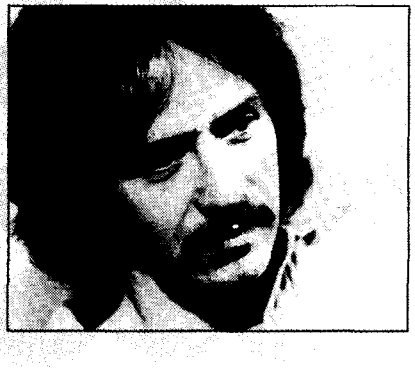


UCLA

- Carroll Ballard: *The Black Stallion; Nutcracker*
- Paul Bartel: *Eating Raoul; Scenes From the Class Struggle in Beverly Hills*
- Charles Burnett: *To Sleep With Anger; My Brother's Wedding*
- Francis Ford Coppola: *Godfather I-III; Apocalypse Now*
- Alex Cox: *Sid and Nancy; Repo Man*
- Colin Higgins: *Harold and Maude* (wri.); *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*
- Tim Hunter: *River's Edge; Paint it Black*
- Nina Menkes: *Magdalena Viraga; Queen of Diamonds*
- Rob Reiner: *Misery; This is Spinal Tap*
- Paul Schrader: *Taxi Driver* (wri.); *Comfort of Strangers*
- Penelope Spheeris: *The Decline of Western Civilization II; Suburbia: The Wild Side*

AFI

- Marty Brest: *Beverly Hills Cop; Midnight Run*
- Mel Damski: *Blind Date; Mischief*
- Amy Heckerling: *Fast Times at Ridgemont High; Look Who's Talking*



- Marshal Herskovitz: *thirtysomething* (co-exec. pro.); *Special Bulletin* (co-wri.; co exec. pro.)
- David Lynch: *Blue Velvet; Wild at Heart*
- Terence Malick: *Days of Heaven*
- Robert Mandel: *Independence Day; F/X*
- Amir Mokri: *Blue Steel; Pacific Heights*
- Jeremy Paul: *The Chosen; The Sting II*
- Don Petrie: *Mystic Pizza; Opportunity Knocks*
- Paul Schrader: *American Gigolo; Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters* (co- wri.) (Schrader also attended UCLA)
- Edward Zwick: *thirtysomething* (co-exec. pro.); *Glory*

USC

- John Carpenter: *Halloween; Escape From New York*
- Ron Howard: *Backdraft; Splash*
- Walter Hill: *48 Hours; Southern Comfort*
- Phil Joanou: *U2 Rattle and Hum; State of Grace*
- Irvin Kershner: *The Empire Strikes Back; Eyes of Laura Mars*
- Randal Kleiser: *Blue Lagoon; Big Top Pee-Wee*
- Michael Lehmann: *Heathers; Hudson Hawk*
- George Lucas: *American Graffiti; Star Wars*
- Paul Mazursky: *Scenes From a Mall; Down and Out in Beverly Hills*
- Kevin Reynolds: *Fandango; Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*
- John Singleton: *Boyz N the Hood*
- Robert Zemeckis: *Romancing the Stone; Back to the Future*

—*D.S.H.*

PHOTOS: A/P WIDE WORLD

Clockwise from upper left: Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas, David Lynch, Ron Howard, John Carpenter.

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rage. But what the film really said is, 'This is what colonialism does. The white wealthy can get people all over the world to eat shit and fuck donkeys.' That's a very appropriate film to make in a university."

Local television news eventually picked up the story, and the film school (with the exception of three professors who continued to defend

Animal Attraction) left Cunningham to twist in the wind. After the university's investigation, the campus counsel sent a letter to Cunningham threatening to sue unless all references to UCLA were deleted from the film's credits and marketing material. The school made it clear that he was no longer welcome. "Now he could fight that and win," one instructor says, "but he's still not back. Censorship is a subtle thing. As soon as you veer away from student-controlled filmmaking, and the prime motivation becomes status or industry connection, you can never trust that these things will be protected. Whether that film would now be stopped going into production, I don't know. I think it probably would be."

Howard Suber is described even by political foes as a brilliant teacher of film analysis. He is a graduate of the school, a founding director of UCLA's film and television archive (the largest in the U.S. other than that of the Library of Congress), and winner of the UCLA distinguished teaching award. During the early phases of transition, he headed the faculty search committee. Suber is also director of the relatively new producer's program which critics say typifies the school's sellout to Hollywood.

"The producer's course is useful," faculty member Stoumen says, "but I'm a little scared of it. I think it gives students the wrong idea, that they don't have to make good films but will get ahead based on whom they know. There's a certain truth to that, but it's nasty and it's not how you develop a great filmmaker."

Suber says that is naive. "We fill kids' minds with the idea that because they made a Super 8 film they're filmmakers. 'Go out and get 'em, tiger. Don't let those Hollywood people corrupt you, you're an artist.' That's fine. I teach film because I believe in art. But if you leave here and don't know the realities of how to get hold of the money, the equipment, how to get your film seen by an audience, then you will simply never get to practice what you came to school to learn."

One of the most popular courses in the producer's program is an evening seminar formally titled the "Role of Management in the Motion Picture Industry," colloquially known as "Power." The course is co-taught by Suber and Hollywood supermogul Peter Guber, current CEO of Columbia Pictures and coproducer of such films as *Batman* and *Rain Man*. Power's main attraction is a roster of illustrious guests who lecture about how they came to control the means of movie production. One of the film school's most famous alums, Francis Ford Coppola, paid a visit just before the end of this spring term.

As Coppola recounted his bumpy progress from high school theater to the top of the motion picture industry, a calculated lesson emerged: that obsession is a prerequisite for success in the film business; that powerful institutions such as studios often block the way of artistic progress; and that to acquire the means of movie production, it may be necessary to operate near the frontiers of ethical conduct. Coppola is a master storyteller, more prophet than lecturer, and the students listened raptly, even rapturously.

It is the type of class that lecturer Boehm describes as "free Hollywood people doing anecdotal bullshit." But from Suber's point of view, such evenings serve a valuable purpose. "What we're trying to do," he said of the class several days before Coppola's lecture, "is to give the students an understanding of the realities of the world out there. We used to build walls. Now we're building bridges."

"The UCLA film school is an institution in search of its soul," says one former professor. "I pray they find it."

In some respects, the film school clearly had become isolated from the industry; perhaps even a victim of its own integrity. Independence produced true innovators who enriched the art of film but left the box office and the alumni fund impoverished. UCLA's professional soundstages, TV studios, and editing rooms are extraordinary, but the equipment inside is thirty years old and near the end of utility. Students are desperate for rehearsal space. Meanwhile, George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, and Johnny Carson donate millions to USC.

Some say that UCLA has attended too closely to the intellectual aspect of filmmaking and ignored the commercial reality to the detriment of students. "I'm not a big fan of Peter Guber and *Batman*," one MFA candidate says. "But you can't deny that *Batman* was sold before it hit the screen. As intellectual and as on-the-edge as a lot of UCLA's films are, there has to be a sense of promotion and exhibition. My particular complaint about this place is that they didn't have a real strong understanding of the outside looking in. The school worked in a vacuum. I think we need to get money and start marketing the program. USC is more gloss than substance, but they're great at it. There has to be a balance."

Suber, however, is confident the industry is taking UCLA ever more seriously. "In the early 1970s when our students graduated and said, 'I'm a filmmaker,' the industry laughed," he says. "But with a generation from UCLA that included Coppola and Paul Schrader, with George Lucas from USC, and Martin Scorsese from NYU, they began hiring film school graduates. Now film school graduates are hiring film school graduates, and the industry no longer laughs. I constantly get calls from major producers who ask, 'You got any good scripts?' "

Suber leans forward, taps a script that lies in the middle of his desk, and tries to suppress a smile: "Which is why

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these two guys—screenwriting students who haven't graduated yet—make a great deal more money than I do as of yesterday." Suber explains that the two UCLA graduate students have just sold their action-adventure script, *Rainbow Warrior*, to Warner Bros. for $300,000. He returns spontaneously several times to their success, each time expressing a mix of emotions. "We get incredibly gifted applicants, and I've said publicly it's time the faculty came up to the level of the students. It's time we hire people who are better than ourselves."

This idea is purportedly behind the decision to trim the roster of full-time instructors. By fall, six of the twenty tenured faculty the film school had at its peak size will be gone. The attrition is facilitated by a new university-wide "golden handshake" early-retirement program.

According to Suber, the film school's plan is to maintain only the minimum number of tenured faculty necessary to "mind the store." The rest of the teaching complement will be "studio professors," successful professionals who teach part-time when their schedules allow, and "technical instructors," recent graduates hired for up to two years to teach students "how to load a magazine and which end of the camera to look through."

But the underlying agenda, critics say, is to purge the faculty of those who oppose the school's transformation. Several professors—including two veterans of the golden era, Mark McCarty and Richard Hawkins—are said to have been forced out. "It's a pernicious trend," Stoumen says. "What's happening is that senior professors who more often than not are very talented and beloved by their students are being let go. And not at retirement age, either. The quality of the faculty has badly diminished. I have a grandson who's interested in film, and he's been asking me where he should apply. To my great regret I cannot recommend UCLA to him anymore."

Gilbert Cates had a short honeymoon as the new dean of the School of Theater, Film, and Television. "The students struck my second day here because the Melnitz Hall editing facilities [previously open around-the-clock] were only going to be open twenty-two hours a day," Cates says. "And they were right! There was just no way to process them through the school [under the new schedule]. I must say it was a most exciting introduction to this new life." By all accounts, Cates handled the crisis with aplomb. He arranged for the editing rooms to stay open and by the end of a three-hour meeting with the strikers, had won them over. "We're excited about Cates," the protest leader said after the meeting. "The first thing he's done that is really noteworthy is that he claims he will take responsibility."

"There was no advantage to putting students into a cocoon where the realities of film as a collaborative medium were scoffed at," says Suber.

Cates, a Hollywood power broker, who is the uncle of actress Phoebe Cates, readily admits that he will try to strengthen the film school's ties to the industry by bringing in more working professionals. "But you have to distinguish between working professionals and the studio establishment," he cautions. "Most people think a working professional is only someone who's doing a feature at 20th Century Fox. That's not the case." Cates says the faculty will continue to include a broad range of filmmakers.

Indeed, Robert A. Nakamura, a graduate of the school who is now a faculty member, says UCLA will actually be improving its nonfiction program by accommodating more students from developing countries and by "expanding ethnographic film—which in its classic sense deals with foreign cultures—to deal with cultures in the United States. The shift to be a little more industry oriented is just to service some of our students who want to hit the mainstream, but our basic approach hasn't really changed." Nakamura and others say that the film school's destiny ultimately depends on the quality of its students, and UCLA continues to attract the best and most diverse in the world.

"No program is going to be able to tell a good filmmaker what to say," one student points out, pausing briefly during the final, frantic work on his thesis film. Next week, he and other MFA candidates will show their films to faculty who will choose which ones are to represent UCLA at the annual Directors Guild screening, an event that introduces student filmmakers to hundreds of industry professionals. "You should get a look at the work," he says. "People are making films here despite all the turmoil, and they're making good films. Amazing films. The one constant here is the talent of the film makers."

Directors have been known to boast that theirs is the most complex art because it incorporates all the others. There is some truth to the claim, which is one reason film schools have trouble establishing a coherent identity. Somehow, they must integrate the subject matter and style of the conservatory, the college of letters, the trade andbusiness schools. And then there is money. Film is indisputably the most expensive art, and this complicates immeasurably the job of teaching it. With Cates as dean, UCLA is better situated than ever before to attract the patronage it needs to thrive. The question is, will such mainstreaming allow UCLA to continue turning out the kind of maverick filmmakers who, for the past quarter century, have kept American independent cinema a live and kicking cultural force? The answer may be coming soon to a theater near you.

Daniel Slocum Hinerfeld is a struggling writer in Santa Monica, California.

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REPLY

THE CANDIDATE'S STORY

ON BEING THE SUBJECT OF AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION SEARCH

I am casually leafing through my copy of the April 1991 issue of *Lingua Franca* when I come across an article by one "G. Kindrow" about an affirmative action search. As a professor who had himself been hired the previous year as the result of such a search, I naturally find the article of particular interest—an interest that increases as I discover several similarities between the case described and my own.

BY MICHAEL S. WARDELL

In fact, after several rereadings, the conclusion becomes undeniable: This article is about me! (A week or so later, Kindrow himself would give me a copy of the piece.) As I thumb back and forth, lingering over the juicy details, I begin to experience a certain unease. Because despite the good things the article says about me, its overall message about affirmative action is far less positive.

Nowhere does Kindrow actually oppose affirmative action. On the level of explicit recommendations, his concluding paragraph says only that such procedures should perhaps be carried out with a "truth in advertising" policy (deemed unconstitutional by the legal commentator, Leslie Francis, whose analysis accompanies the article), which would formally announce the restriction of candidates. Yet in the tone of the article, the highlighting of certain kinds of costs and not others, the cues for engaging and disengaging our emotions, the message is one of dubiousness. Above all, there is very little in the piece about the circumstances and the past (and in some cases, ongoing) practices that made affirmative action necessary in the first place.

In fairness to Kindrow, he was not setting out to write a general, theoretical piece about the pros and cons of affirmative action. Yet, whatever he may have intended, his article will be of far more service to those opposed to affirmative action than to those supporting it. At a time when the indications are that race and civil rights will be among the major issues of the 1992 presidential campaign, and perhaps of the 1990s in general, that slant is unfortunate and should not be ignored.

Here then is a counternarrative to redress the balance somewhat, from the minority candidate himself. I hope that my own story will help illustrate Leslie Francis's argument that the article reveals the failure of "Midwestern" University to reflect on the inherent biases of its procedures for evaluating minority candidates.

In a sense, my case is instructive precisely because of its atypicality. I had none of the handicaps with which the average black American must struggle. As the son of a university professor in the Caribbean, I grew up on a university campus in my native country and attended an elite high school. As a member of a privileged class, I suffered none of the psychic wounding and destruction of self-confidence that systematic racism often causes. After taking an undergraduate degree at home, I continued my studies at a university I'll call Big Canadian University (BCU) and eventually graduated with good grades and positive letters of recommendation.

I did my graduate work in Canada (not at Rutgers) because the schools were relatively cheap there. My family is well-off by local standards, but their Third World dollars could not have come close to covering U.S. tuition. BCU has an international reputation and the department I studied in (not English) is regarded as the best in the country, so this didn't, at first, seem to present a problem.

One of the most painfully illuminating points for me about Kindrow's article was that this was sheer delusion on my part, since, in the American scheme of things, BCU's program just did not rank very high. This meant that, unbeknown to me and largely for financial reasons, I was already disadvantaged in the U.S. job market. And I hadn't even had to face the kinds of hurdles most black Americans must surmount.

Kindrow admits that in screening applications, the department routinely uses the quality of the graduate school as a de facto filter. But how many talented black students would have the

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resources to get into the schools on Kindrow's preferred list? Since even getting into these schools requires surviving a whole pyramid of "screenings," mostly of a nonacademic kind, the uncritical application of this final filter is a de facto endorsement of a systematically biased status quo.

It has been observed of the free enterprise system that the best way to get rich is to choose one's parents carefully. In an academic career, there is somewhat greater leeway for individual merit and effort to make a difference. But for those handicapped by race and class, the consequences of being limited to a less-than-stellar graduate program are likely to be far-reaching, if not permanent.

Similar points can be made about the absence of big names on my CV (another revelation, this: So much for the standing of my Canadian referees!). If one has not been able to attend one of the top schools in the first place, how is one supposed to make contact with those rarefied circles?

My discipline is one in which the underrepresentation of blacks is so extreme by comparison with other branches of the academy that it has become the subject of ongoing discussion in the profession's newsletter. It is an underrepresentation sustained less by overt racism than by subtle networks of ethnicity, whole hidden structures of personal contacts. This is not a conspiracy theory but the truism that people in the same profession tend to socialize together, and that to a significant extent in this country, their socializing continues to be along racial lines. And this is bound to affect crucial decisions about whom to interview and hire, whom to solicit for letters of recommendation and other professional evaluations, whom to invite to conferences or to publish in journals. In their exclusivity, their reliance on who-knows-whom, these networks can also work against whites. But through race and class disadvantage, black academics will probably be handicapped to begin with in graduate school and in their profession, and psychically burdened by their isolation. For them, the ethnic character of these networks represents a further heightening of these barriers that is not faced by white academics.

At one recent national meeting, I was regaled with horror stories by two black colleagues who graduated in the 1970s, when there were even fewer blacks in the profession than there are now. I heard the story of A, whose book, the result of years of labor, would have gotten only a one-paragraph note in one journal had another black American not gone out of his way to do a lengthier review of it. I was told of B, who despite a publication list as long as your arm, seldom gets conference invitations or requests to do book reviews. Of C ... D ...

Illustration by John Hart

Kindrow admits that without affirmative action, I would never have made the interview list. Yet, within the set of possibilities open to me, I had done what was necessary: gone to a good but affordable school, gotten strong letters of recommendation, and started publishing. But by Midwestern's standards, BCU wasn't good enough, my letters weren't from big enough names, and my publications were presumably insufficient or irrelevant. Had the search been conducted on ostensibly nonracial grounds, I would still be at "Northwest" (the first school that hired me) today. And if three years before, the dean at Northwest had not put pressure on its department to conduct a minority search, and had there not been one individual in that department who insisted this recommendation be taken seriously, I would be out of the academy altogether. After graduating from BCU, I was unemployed in Canada for two years, and at the professional meeting where I got the offer from Northwest, I had decided that if nothing worked out there, it was time to cut my losses and try in midlife to change careers.

This needs some emphasis, since in a sense it is the whole point of my story: Despite all the advantages with which I began, despite the abilities that Kindrow praises, it is only through affirmative action that I am a university professor today.

So my story is, in a sense, a success story: from unemployment in Canada, and the agonized thought that all those years in the dim, cobwebbed recesses of the BCU library had been wasted, to a tenure-track job in a top-twenty department in less than five years. The department at Midwestern has been very good to me, and I expect to be happy here.

But I have no illusions about how I came to be here. When I visit Canada or the Caribbean and friends or former fellow students ask me how I made it, I have a standard answer: "Ability, hard work, race, and luck—not 'not necessarily in that order' but necessarily not in that order."

All policies will have social costs, and I don't want to deny that occasional inequities may result from affirmative action. But the alternative is, it seems to me, to continue with a system that is not neutral but continues in diverse blatant and subtle ways to be stacked against racial minorities.

Michael S. Wardell is the pseudonym of an assistant professor at a large midwestern university.

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RESEARCH FILE

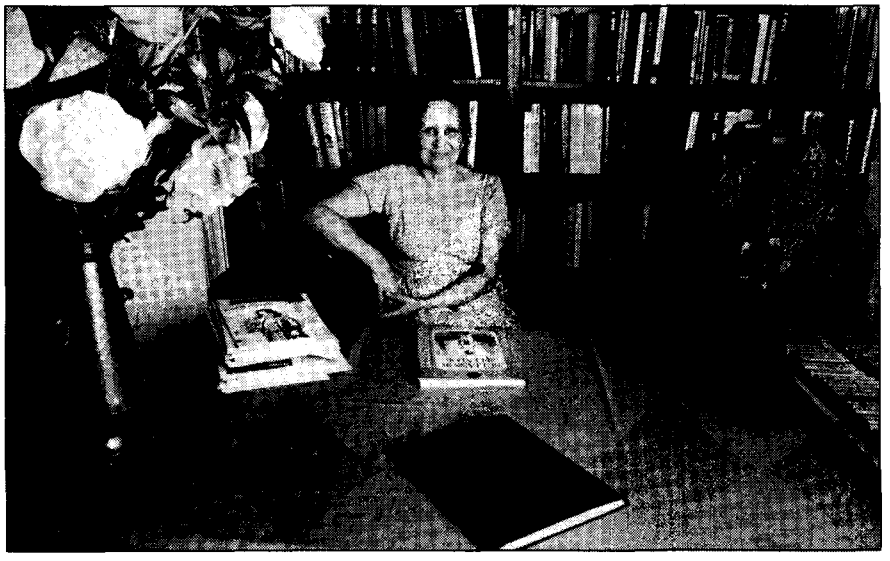
DOCUMENTS IN SEARCH OF SCHOLARS

THE KURDISH LIBRARY
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

For a while last spring, the world paid attention to the Kurds, and at the Brooklyn brownstone that houses the only Kurdish library in the western hemisphere, the phone seldom stopped ringing. *Nightline* called, and *The New York Times* and frantic Kurdish exiles with relatives in prison or in flight from Iraq, and all kinds of people who wanted to know how they could help the Kurdish refugees who were dying in geopolitical purgatory. It was late April before Vera Beaudin Saeedpour, the library's fiercely committed founder and director, could find the time to take down the big plastic Christmas tree someone had given her.

Their latest crisis endured, the Kurds have by now slipped down the collective worry list, lodging somewhere behind civil war in Yugoslavia or global warming or the future of the Supreme Court. But for Saeedpour, the self-appointed guardian of Kurdish culture outside Kurdistan, *la lutte continue*. After World War I, the Allies promised the Kurds their own state—a promise broken in the subsequent repartition of former Ottoman lands. Though they have fought for one ever since, the Kurds are still without a nation of their own; scholars still need Saeedpour's help investigating why.

Since opening the library in 1986, Saeedpour has collected some 1,500 books about the history and culture of the Kurds, who number between fifteen and twenty million and constitute the largest ethnic minority without a homeland in the world. She has also acquired reports and monographs, periodicals, maps, photographs, videos and audiocassettes of Kurdish dance and music, and an oral history archive documenting the experience of Kurdish exiles in the United States and elsewhere. One particularly strong periodical collection covers the century's only episode of Kurdish autonomy, the short-lived Mahabad republic of 1946. Other important recent acquisitions include the first book of Kurdish proverbs in English translation, an unpublished 3,000-page Kurdish-Arabic dictionary, and a rare history of the Kurdish people written by a Kurd. The books and papers share the parlor floor of Saeedpour's ivy-draped brownstone with a collection of traditional Kurdish crafts and costumes—musical instruments, brightly colored rugs, skirts of hand-loomed Turkish goat hair, exuberantly beaded and bespangled vests—displayed in glass cases. The place has the look of a Victorian ethnographer's house—overstuffed with the detritus of a culture under siege.



VERA BEAUDIN SAEEDPOUR AT THE KURDISH LIBRARY.

PHOTO BY PATRICIA SENER

Saeedpour is not, in fact, an ethnographer by training, though she is an inveterate crosser of cultural boundaries. She was a forty-three-year-old doctoral candidate at Columbia, writing a dissertation on the urban environment, and taking care of her five kids from a former marriage when she fell in love with Houmayoun Saeedpour, a twenty-six-year-old Kurdish engineering student from Sandaj, Iran. The daughter of the only Jewish family in the Vermont town where she'd spent most of her life, Vera had never before met a Kurd. And Houmayoun, a quiet, rather melancholy man who had courted her with coffee cake and flowers, didn't talk a lot about his ethnic identity. But one day, not long after the couple married in 1975, he approached Vera at her desk and shoved an *Oxford English Dictionary* under her nose. As Vera recalls it: "He asked me, 'What means *predatory?*' I said, 'It means when a lion jumps a gazelle. Now leave me alone, I'm working.' And he said, 'No, it mean *Kurd.*' I looked and sure enough, right there next to *Kurd* in the *OED* it said, 'A tall, pastoral, predatory people.'" Saeedpour started reading everything she could about the Kurds,

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first because "I had to find out whether I was married to a predator," then because she was indignant about the characterization and fascinated by the history of this mostly Muslim mountain people whose aspirations to nationhood had been betrayed with such dispiriting regularity. Enlisting the help of Jean-Paul Sartre and of the sociologist Gunnar Myrdal, she successfully lobbied the *OED* to drop the derogatory definition. Houmayoun died of leukemia in 1979 (in the midst of the hostage crisis, Vera Saeedpour managed to bring some of her husband's relatives over from Iran to donate white blood cells, but the treatment didn't take) and Saeedpour's commitment to the Kurds seemed only to intensify.

If you drop by the library these days, you'll probably find Saeedpour on the phone, chain-smoking, blasting press coverage of the Gulf war and its aftermath, or issuing warnings about the plight of the Turkish Kurds. Unlike their Iraqi counterparts, she'll remind you, the Kurds of southern Turkey did not emerge from the war with the promise of an autonomous region, and their very existence is still scarcely recognized. (It was only in April that Turkey eased its ban on the Kurdish language: It can now be used in unofficial settings but not in publications, schools, or political discourse.) You may also hear something about the precarious future of the library itself. Both the Kurdish Library and the Kurdish Program with which it is affiliated (another brainchild of Saeedpour's, the program sponsors a traveling photography exhibit, a Kurdish dance troupe, and a scholarly journal called *Kurdish Times*) are entirely reliant on private donations. (Some of those donations come in the form of books, wrapped in brown paper and pitched over the garden wall by night. Saeedpour says the mystery donors are Kurdish exiles still fearful of retribution for asserting their ethnicity.) "Doctor Vera," as she's affectionately known in the Kurdish community, worries that the trickle of funds that support her and pay for the library's new acquisitions will dry up entirely someday. But in the meantime, she soldiers on. "The curse of the Kurds," she says, only half-joking. "That's what I'm subject to. I just can't seem to escape it." LF

Enlisting the help of Sartre, Saeedpour lobbied the OED to drop its derogatory definition of the Kurds.

The Kurdish Library is open to the public by appointment. 345 Park Place, Brooklyn, NY 11238. (718) 783-7930.

THE WORD FROM THE KURDS

Taken from Kurdish Proverbs, *a special issue of* Kurdish Times. *Collected by Abdul-Kader Amin. Translated by Abdul-Kader Amin and Charles Hoffman.*

BELIEVE NEITHER IN THE OPPRESSOR'S LAUGH NOR THE PLEASANTNESS OF THE WINTER WEATHER.

POVERTY IS LIKE A SHIRT MADE OF FIRE.

A ROCK IS HEAVIEST IN ITS OWN PLACE.

THE FRIEND LOOKS AT YOUR FACE;
THE ENEMY AT YOUR SHOES.

DON'T BE SO SOUR THAT THEY SPIT YOU OUT; DON'T BE SO SWEET THAT THEY SWALLOW YOU.

BE ARROGANT IN EXILE AND FART IN THE DESERT.

YOU CAN'T MILK A COW AND EAT SUNFLOWER SEEDS AT THE SAME TIME.

A ONE-FACED PIG IS BETTER THAN A TWO-FACED MAN.

HE WHO DEPENDS ON HIS NEIGHBORS
WILL SLEEP WITHOUT SUPPER.

A BIG HEAD IS A FORTUNE; BIG FEET ARE DISASTER.

NEITHER TIGHT SHOES NOR A QUARRELSOME HOUSE.

DON'T SERVE YOUR SPEECH UNTIL IT IS COOKED.

A CAMEL'S LOAD IS DATES, BUT HIS FOOD IS THORNS.

A FACT IS BITTER.

A FOOLISH HEAD IS LIKE A VEGETABLE KILLED BY FROST.

WORSHIPPING FOREIGNERS BRINGS HEARTBREAK.

A BRAVE MAN DIES ONCE; A TIMID MAN DIES DAILY.

I WOULD RATHER GOD TOOK MY LIFE THAN ASK MY SON-IN-LAW FOR CLOTHES.

A CHILD MAY GIVE PAIN BUT IS NEVER BORING.

HEY, FIGHTERS! DON'T FORGET PEACE.

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Continued from p. 31
will work on their own terms, and to a certain extent, that means working in the dark. When you work governed by theory, the answers are fixed in advance, and so are the questions.

Lf: *What's your reaction to the work being done in cultural studies, by people like Andrew Ross, Constance Penley, John Fiske, Janice Radway? I'm thinking especially of the new focus on audience response and resistance, and the emphasis on acknowledging and theorizing the pleasures—and even powers—of fandom. Madonna's the celebrity of choice here.*

A lot of the people in cultural studies these days kind of remind me of the FBI in the fifties: They find subversion everywhere. (The difference is that they like it, or at least claim to.) And I think that's nonsense. It is not subversive for a bunch of people to give up their lives and join a cult and become trekkies; this is not threatening the social order; this is not deepening anyone's life.

The argument that I made in *Lipstick Traces* was that moments when things are actually put into doubt are rare; they're not out there all the time; they're dying stillborn all the time. For them to actually catch people up in them, to achieve content and be about something, to reach a pitch where they are going to actually change people's lives for better or for worse—that doesn't happen often. It doesn't happen at every concert by a popular figure or in every weird movie that becomes a hit—*Robocop,* say.

"Subversion" means a number of things now: It means this is good, in the accepted discourse that we're all using; it means this is interesting, and if you don't read this, you may be left behind; it means this is hip. It doesn't mean a damn thing that has anything to do with subversion, which is to say burrowing from below to cause structures of oppression and domination to crumble. "Subversion" is one of those words that has to be retired—it's become a buzzword, a substitute for thinking.

Besides, I didn't like Andrew Ross's book [*No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*]—many of my friends did—because I wasn't convinced that he actually got off on a lot of the stuff that he was embracing so fervently. A lot of these people aren't very convincing on that score. (For that matter, there are plenty of film critics out there of whom you could really believe that if they weren't being paid to do it, they'd be embarrassed to be seen going to the movies. I don't know any good rock critics whose lives would not be unspeakably impoverished if they couldn't listen to music.) Look, pleasure is hard to talk about, but there are people who can do it. Linda Williams in her book *Hardcore* for example. This is a woman who, it seems to me, was really scared of the kind of shit she was going to take for writing a frank, unapologetic book about pornography. So you can feel her, instead of diving in, walking gingerly at times. But the book works, and face it—there's no way she could have written it without liking a lot of porn movies.

Now, Madonna is a different question. Madonna is one popular artist who clearly believes she's subversive and means to be subversive and is constantly trying to find new ways to be more subversive. Her goal, I would think, is to do things that will sooner or later make you very uncomfortable and me very uncomfortable, even though as we sit here today we could both agree that we are the two biggest Madonna fans in the world and each make a little cut in our hand and mix up the blood to pledge it. She wants to come up with something that is going to challenge everybody's view of the way things ought to be—and she's pretty good at it. But what's subversive about Madonna is this enormously self-willed, self-conscious, thinking, gleeful individual, not the people out in the audience who are saying "Wow, gosh, I'd sure like to be like Madonna." That can be a beginning of something; usually it isn't.

What's subversive—or let's say active—about identifying with a performer is not saying "Look at Elvis Presley: I want to be like Elvis Presley." It may be saying that perhaps, but really meaning "Look at what he's doing. I want to be ... me. I wonder who that is." Many people make that leap and that's interesting. But saying "If I only got a belt like that, life would be perfect" just isn't. Lf

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Letters

Continued from page 3

I found Daniel Harris's article "AIDS and Theory," both revealing and obscure at once. Harris is right to point out the disturbing change in AIDS activism from the fight for more treatment options and better care for people with AIDS toward an "impotently theoretical" policing of speech acts concerning AIDS. But his discussions of the role of ACT UP in this situation are flawed in two respects. First of all, ACT UP is not the only organization that exists in AIDS activism. His exclusive focus on ACT UP would seem to deny the importance of organizations such as GMHC and others never mentioned in his article. Second, Harris's equation of ACT UP with ivory tower academic theory is both facile and deceiving, probably blinded by Harris's own sense of the academy's omnipotence. As a member of ACT UP New York, I can attest that the vast majority of those who participate in ACT UP and its actions are not academics and have very little connection with the "academic theory" that Harris supposedly deplores.

Harris's article is also flawed by another, more important omission from his discussion of ACT UP: his total refusal to address the role of gay activism as a cofactor in the fight against AIDS, an omission which hearkens back to Harris's own suspicious heterocentric affiliations: *The Quarterly, Harper's Magazine, The Washington Post,* etc. ACT UP (since he insists on limiting the discussion to that organization) is a complex group that has many different agendas at stake, not the least of which is the fight against the homophobia that has allowed AIDS (still perceived as a "gay" disease) to become the political crisis that it is. What Harris derides as the "janitorial duties of cleaning up the public discussion of the disease" is actually a vital part of the fight against the causes of AIDS as a political crisis and the institutionalized neglect of the people in the highest risk categories for HIV/AIDS infection. Harris's clean-shaven criticisms of ACT UP's role as a "theoretical" and "academic" organization devoted to the revision of public ideas about AIDS conveniently ignores ACT UP's more important praxis elements, such as the treatment and data working group and the needle exchange program.

It has become very trendy recently for critics who are not involved in AIDS activism to tear down groups like ACT UP. I have found that this sort of criticism is usually a reflection of the critic's own sense of impotency, which usually stems from his inability to see his way clear of the academic blubber he claims to criticize. "ACT UP should grow up," one street-corner critic shouted at me the other day when he saw the sticker on my jacket. That's exactly what it's trying to do. Why don't you just leave it alone?

Dennis Hunter, *Brooklyn, New York*

DANIEL HARRIS RESPONDS:

As an openly gay man and former gay activist, I found it particularly galling that Gary Spear would willfully misread my statement that "this kind of writing (i.e., Lee Edelman's zany interpretation of the ACT UP logo) displays a desperate insistence on being accepted and hence validated, not only in academia but by the public as well." By suppressing the real subject of the sentence, "this kind of writing," and substituting instead "we," i.e., "gay activists," Spear allows himself the unprincipled luxury of characterizing this remark as "uniquely homophobic" when it is in fact simply an indictment of the intellectual charlatanry with which many fourth-rate academics have clawed their way to the top of the heap. Those who brandish allegations of racism, misogyny, and homophobia like a crucifix in order to ward off critics baring their fangs and lunging at their jugulars are indulging in the last (increasingly, the first) refuge of scoundrels.

In response to the general criticism made by both E. Ann Kaplan and Dennis Hunter that ACT UP is by no means the only organization involved in this crisis, I would like to point out, to justify my selectivity, that, while this is certainly true, ACT UP's media whorishness has garnered more attention than any of the other groups involved and has therefore had a more instrumental role in shaping the American public's attitude toward AIDS activism. For the record, I would also like to add that I support the better part of ACT UP's agenda—in particular, the activities of the treatment and data working group and the needle exchange program, which Hunter rightly singles out as two of the most practical—or, in his word, "praxis"—elements of the organization. And yet, in general, regardless of the group's many accomplishments, ACT UP's intellectual narcissism prioritizes methods over issues, so that it itself and not the fight against AIDS takes center stage. That academic theory has contributed to its tendency to be swallowed up by its own rhetoric, as Hunter doubts, can be seen in the antics of the San Francisco-based ACT UP affinity group, Boys With Arms Akimbo, who have reached the nadir of postmodern political inanity by taking their politics not into the streets but into the Castro district's boutique windows, which they decorate with their own logo as well as with lofty proclamations that their organization represents a new style of activism that—sound familiar?—"de-centers" authority and "deconstructs" hierarchies of power.

As to my "own suspicious heterocentric affiliations" with *The Quarterly, Harper's Magazine,* and *The Washington Post,* I would like to add to my byline the *Gay Community News,* the now defunct Canadian gay monthly *The Body Politic,* and *The New York Native,* one of the best gay newspapers in the early and mid-eighties. Finally, I would like to draw attention to my essay on AIDS obituaries anthologized in a book coming out this fall from the University of Toronto Press, *Break the Fatal Silence,* the proceeds from which will be donated to—surprise!—the Canadian chapter of ACT UP.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

"We are again witnessing the growth of conspiratorial forms of campus radicalism, which postulate an all-powerful 'Establishment' out to crush racial minorities, women, and the poor."

"A new generation of university leaders, weaned on the protest politics of the 1960s, such as Nannerl Keohane of Wellesley, James Freedman of Dartmouth, and Donna Shalala of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, are quite happy to attribute all opposition to resurgent bigotry."

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"For [Houston] Baker, the incoming president of the Modern Language Association, it is as if literacy were literally the problem."

"Dogmatism and hypersensitivity have made Oberlin such an unpleasant place that it's hard to imagine things not taking a turn for the better before long."

Lest the unwary reader assume that the "aggrieved tone," the "sneering and ill-tempered" character, and the echoes of a "high dudgeon" to be found in these passages mark them as extracts from the National Association of Scholars quarterly, *Academic Questions,* ("NAS: Who Are These Guys Anyway?" April 1991), to say nothing of the NAS as a whole, all of the rather harsh observations just cited come from articles in the February 18 *New Republic* of which Jacob Weisberg is a senior editor. Indeed, the last passage is Weisberg's own.

Jacob Weisberg is a seasoned and perceptive analyst of the subjects he examines for *The New Republic,* a magazine widely admired for its intelligent investigations and editorial balance. It is a shame, therefore, that so much of Weisberg's treatment of the NAS for *Lingua Franca* is skewed to suggest hysterical overreaction to problems that he and his *New Republic* colleagues themselves find so deeply disturbing.

This disjuncture is conspicuous in Weisberg's use of Stanley Fish to caricature the NAS and minimize the issues it confronts: "To read the things being written by some of those people, you'd think Shakespeare was holed up in a cave in Montana because everyone wants to kill him, that Milton had been driven out of the academy by Zane Grey." But what might the reader deduce about the credibility of Fish's judgment and the propriety of his sarcasm had his remarks been juxtaposed to the following *New Republic* characterization of his outlook and modus operandi: "Fish represents an extreme case, but similar formulations of academic cultism, paranoia, and power-mongering are an increasing part of the intellectual atmosphere on many campuses."

In still another instance, Weisberg suggests that the NAS's opposition to the proposed revision of a University of Texas freshman composition course was merely directed against an effort to refocus it "on social issues." But in *The New Republic,* Fred Siegel states accurately that the course's new theme was in fact "white male racism" and quotes approvingly the following characterization of the course's sponsors: "Probably only four of the eighty members of the Texas English department believe that a central mission of their department is to teach people how to write."

Even more troubling is Weisberg's snide dismissal of one professor's unease at being photographed at an NAS conference, suggesting that the professor's fear of reprisal was mere theater rather than a reflection of the intolerance that prevails on many campuses. But here's what Weisberg himself says in *The New Republic* about the current realities of academic life at one prestigious college, Oberlin: "Most of [the students] who aren't brainwashed are well cowed. With rare exceptions, the faculty hasn't been much braver."

Weisberg concludes his *Lingua Franca* essay by opining that the NAS's "potential for growth may be limited by its political slant" and asserts that it has so far "failed to attract many moderates or liberals," who might otherwise be sympathetic to its goals. By the simple expedient of placing scare quotes around "liberals" he inexplicably strips one prominent NAS member, Duke University's James David Barber, of such status. Presumably, Weisberg must now do the same for Jacques Barzun, identified in *Lingua Franca* as a moderate who has "kept his distance" but who in fact has lately joined the NAS, or for Eugene Genovese, who has committed an identical sin.

Needless to say, Weisberg is not obliged to share the views of his colleagues at *The New Republic,* but his derisive characterization of the NAS in the pages of *Lingua Franca* is particularly hard to square with the comments he himself has already made. This self-contradiction in Weisberg's position is nowhere more evident than with respect to his admirable *New Republic* injunction to "the silent majority of students and faculty who are true liber-

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als ... to reassert themselves, and not worry too much about the names they get called." By trafficking in unwarranted reproaches and innuendo when describing one of the very few efforts to encourage such reassertion, Jacob Weisberg only strengthens the forces of intimidation.

Stephen H. Balch, *President and Executive Director, National Association of Scholar*

JACOB WEISBERG REPLIES:

I am surprised that Stephen Balch takes my article as a one-sided attack upon his organization. I did not intend it that way. The quotation from Stanley Fish no more represents my point of view than the many quotations from Balch and his colleagues at the NAS. His beef is with Fish, not with me. I do not understand how Balch reads a negative slant into my account of his group's efforts to preserve the integrity of the freshman writing program at the University of Texas. It was included as an example of his group's effectiveness, as was the example of the challenge to the "free-speech" code at the University of Michigan. Pointing out that the NAS and its quarterly, *Academic Questions,* sometimes take on a cranky, denunciatory tone doesn't contradict anything I or other authors have written in *The New Republic*. As Balch accurately points out, I have argued elsewhere that it is necessary for liberals to stand up to the atmosphere of intellectual intimidation and group-think that has become prevalent at places like Oberlin. But as I indicated in my article, the NAS has, with a few exceptions, failed to attract campus liberals. The reason, as I argued, is that instead of defending free expression and the liberal arts in a neutral way, the NAS falls prey to the kind of crabbiness and exaggeration of which Balch's letter is yet another example.

MY TURN

Barry Gross's comments (Letters, June 1991) about my hiring ["The Candidate" (April 1991)] raise more general political issues than can be adequately dealt with in a letter, so I'll regretfully restrict myself to pointing out two specific factual errors, and one interesting biographical detail.

(a) It's incorrect to say "solely because of his race, the fortunate candidate got a lighter teaching load." All junior professors in "Midwestern's" department get a lighter teaching load, so they can get a chance to do necessary research.

(b) Since Gross doesn't know my qualifications or my publication record (not that ignorance seems in general to have any inhibiting effect on him), he's hardly in a position to assert that my salary differential came solely because of my race. It's a commonplace of the logic of the academic market that new professors with experience tend to get higher salaries, especially if the department hasn't recently had salary increases to keep pace with inflation. Blowing my own horn here is doubly distasteful, for the standard reasons and also because it might give Gross the illusion that I need to "prove" myself to him. But in the broader interests of refuting these kinds of allegations, let me say that at the end of my three years at "Northwest," I had the second highest salary of the seven junior professors in that department, in part because I had more publications than any of them. This, as well as the fact that the cost of living in "Midwestern's" part of the country was much higher, helped to increase my bargaining power with "Midwestern."

(c) Finally, since we're on the subject of publications, let me share with the readers of *Lingua Franca*—doubtless still bemused by the contemplation of Carol Iannone's CV in the June issue—some intriguing facts about another NAS luminary. Barry R. Gross graduated in 1966 and, according to that useful guide *The Philosopher's Index,* has produced just one book and four journal articles in the subsequent quarter-century. As a publication record this is somewhat short of "decent." (What exactly is the deal, Barry? Are these emaciated CVs some kind of membership requirement for the NAS? Or are these just the type of people the organization happens to attract?) Consider yourself lucky you're not on the market today, son. You'd need an affirmative action policy for sub-par white males. Of course, they already have one—it's called institutional racism.

Michael S. Wardell, *"The Candidate," Midwestern State*

"Michael S. Wardell" is the pseudonym of the professor hired in the affirmative action search detailed in "The Candidate: Inside One Affirmative Action Search" (April 1991). His response to that article appears on page 38 of this issue.

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